


HIDDEN HISTORIES —
THE UNFOLDING STORY OF IRELAND
IN WWI



TOMMY ATKINS

**THE SONG THEY SING
AS THEY MARCH ALONG**

**IT'S A
LONG, LONG
WAY TO
TIPPERARY**

WRITTEN AND COMPOSED BY
JACK JUDGE
AND
HARRY WILLIAMS

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HIDDEN HISTORIES —
THE UNFOLDING STORY
OF IRELAND IN WWI

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THIS BOOKLET PRESENTS A SYNOPSIS OF THE TALKS GIVEN AT THE HISTORY
FEDERATIONS SEMINAR AT DUNDALK IN OCTOBER 2014

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WORLD WAR I IN THE DECADE OF CENTENARY COMMEMORATIONS: AN OVERVIEW



DR BRIAN WALKER

In this paper I want to explore how our appreciation and understanding of the First World War has changed over the years. This is important. We are already in the first years of the decade of commemoration of important events a century ago, over the period 1912-23. For some this has been a cause of worry because, in Ireland, north and south, such anniversaries have been sources of great discord in the past. Referring to the 1960s, Sir Kenneth Bloomfield has remarked -; ‘anniversaries are the curse of Ireland. Like saints’ days, the dates of historically resonant events punctuate the Northern Ireland calendar, calling for an orgy of reminiscence, celebration and demonstration from some section or other of the population’. He continued; ‘it does not seem to matter that some of these demonstrations annoy or infuriate other people; this is, indeed for some of the participants, a principal attraction’. What is fascinating is that commemoration of the First World War has changed radically. Fifty years ago it was a subject of division and discord. Recently, however, new ways of viewing and celebrating these commemorations have emerged. This reflects a new maturity and respect for diversity, and a deeper historical understanding. This gives me great hope that this following decade of commemorations will also be a time of understanding and peaceful appreciation of the different strands of our history.

Northern responses

The first Armistice Day on 11 November 1919 was widely marked throughout Ireland. In the six counties of Ulster which later became Northern Ireland services were held in churches of all denominations. From the early 1920s the events were commemorated not only with

a two-minute silence and church services, but also with parades to new war memorials. There is evidence that in the early days there were efforts to keep these events open to all sections of the community. At a ceremony in Ballymena on 11 November 1924 Major General Sir Oliver Nugent who had commanded the 36th (Ulster) Division at the Somme, declared that 'the service given by the Ulstermen in the war was not confined to one creed or one denomination; it was given by Ulstermen of all denominations and all classes'.

In spite of these comments and inclusive incidents, however, the Armistice Day commemorations in Northern Ireland became largely linked with Unionism. As Keith Jeffery has commented: 'for them the blood sacrifice of the Somme was equal and opposite to that of Easter 1916'. It would be wrong, however, to write off entirely Catholic and Nationalist involvement in the northern Armistice Day commemorations. Catholic ex-servicemen continued to mark the occasion in some places, for example in Newry. After the second world war, Armistice Day was replaced by Remembrance Day and held on the Sunday closest to 11 November.

Southern responses

On the first Armistice day on 11 November 1919, in line with a papal decree, a special mass was held at all catholic churches in Ireland to mark the occasion. A two minute silence at eleven o'clock was observed widely. Subsequently, with the War of Independence and the settling up of the new Irish Free State, commemoration of this event became very controversial. Jane Leonard has commented: 'division rather than dignity surrounded the commemoration of the war in Ireland'. Official attitudes were ambivalent but generally tolerant in the 1920s. Conscious of the many Irish people who had died during the war, including members of their own families, the government sent representatives to the wreath-laying ceremonies in Dublin and London. The formation of a Fianna Fail government in 1932, however, led to a downgrading of the commemorations. Official representatives were withdrawn from the main-wreath laying ceremony in Dublin from November 1932. Temporarily banned because of the second world war, parades resumed from 1946. Parades continued during the 1950s and 1960s, but for many of those involved, there was a clear sense that they had become marginalised and excluded from the new Irish identity and sense of history that had now become dominant.

The 1970s Onwards

The 1970s and 1980s witnessed important developments in how Remembrance Sunday commemorations were held. In 1971, all public parades and ceremonies on Remembrance Sunday were cancelled

because of the deteriorating situation in Northern Ireland. In the following year such public events resumed in the north but not in the south. As before, these events involved primarily but not exclusively members of the unionist and Protestant communities. In 1971 the Remembrance Sunday ceremony at the Irish National War Memorial at Islandbridge in Dublin was cancelled. Subsequently, in the face of republican hostility, in the south neither this event nor other public occasions of commemoration of the Irish world war dead were restored, apart from a service in St Patrick's cathedral.

From the late 1980s, however, the nature of these world war commemorations, north and south, changed markedly, influenced in part by the new work on the first world war by historians like Keith Jeffery and journalist Kevin Myers, and in part by reaction to the eleven deaths caused by an IRA bomb at the war memorial in Enniskillen, Co.Fermanagh, on Remembrance Sunday, 8 November 1987. A key moment in this change of attitude was Remembrance Sunday 1993 when, for the first time, the Irish president, Mary Robinson, attended the Remembrance Day ceremonies in St Patrick's cathedral, Dublin. During the rest of her term of office, President Robinson continued to attend this service, as have her successors.

In Northern Ireland, the decade which followed the Enniskillen bombing also witnessed important changes in how Remembrance Sunday was marked. Many now sought to view this commemorative occasion in a more inclusive way. In the 1990s SDLP councillors began to attend remembrance ceremonies. The Somme Association, founded in 1988 under the chairmanship of unionist councillor Dr Ian Adamson, established in 1994 at Newtownards, Co.Down, the Somme Heritage Centre, which remembered all soldiers from Ireland (not only members of the 36th Ulster Division), who had died at the Battle of the Somme. An important cross-border initiative to build a peace park at Messines in Belgium, in memory of all the Irish who died in the First World War, involved Paddy Harte, a former Fine Gael deputy for Donegal, and Glenn Barr, a former Derry loyalist leader as well as many young work volunteers from north and south.

These changes have continued in the present century. In 2007 the first official meeting of the Irish president and the Northern Ireland first minister (Mary McAleese and Rev.Ian Paisley) took place at the Somme Heritage Centre at Newtownards, Co.Down, to open an exhibition on the 36th Ulster Division and the 16th Irish Division. The visit of Queen Elizabeth to the Republic in 2011 marked a new level of understanding our history. The Queen and President Mary McAleese together visited the Garden of Remembrance and the Irish National War memorial.

Finally

These changes are evidence of a new maturity towards remembering and celebrating the past. This gives me great confidence when I look to the next decade of commemorations. When we consider the important historical events which we will mark over the next decade it is clear that some have the potential to be experiences as part of a shared history. Others, however, will have strong resonances for some communities but not for others. This need not be a problem. We cannot expect agreement on the importance of all such events, given differences between communities and individuals in both their political positions today and people's historical backgrounds. Still, people can try to explain their own positions today and why such events are important to them. Also we should try to understand other perspectives. The evidence of how people have treated these commemorations over recent years gives great hope for how the forthcoming decade of commemorations will be handled. For this reason, I believe we can look forward to the next decade with great optimism.



Dr. Denis Marnane, Dr. Donal Hall, Prof. Brian Walker, Quincy Dougan, Frank Taaffe, Pdraig Yeates, Johnny Dooher

THE GREAT WAR – A LOT OF PEOPLE DIED



PADRAIG YEATES

Last month I wrote a fairly facetious letter to the *Irish Times* which upset a few people, but I was just trying to make a simple point in a way that might help us look at the interminable debate about the Great War in a new way. The letter said:

If we want to find anything positive out of the conjuncture of the Home Rule crisis and the outbreak of the First World War, we might recall that it took tens of thousands of adult Irish males willing to fight for, or against, Home Rule and sent them overseas to kill foreigners instead of each other. The British War Office paid them for their services and gave money to their dependants, while we were spared the collateral damage of sectarian, tribal warfare.

Meanwhile the disarming of the Irish Volunteers after the Easter Rising in 1916 ensured that when war did eventually come to Ireland, from 1919 to 1924, it was on a much more limited scale than would otherwise have been the case.

Compared with other combatants in Europe we came off comparatively lightly. The absence of guns and people willing to use them was a blessing in disguise. As subsequent events proved, political violence could not cure the underlying social and economic maladies that beset Irish society north and south in subsequent decades.

I think anyone looking at events between 1912, the signing of the Ulster Covenant and 1925, the completion of the Boundary Commission's work, must be struck by how much the political superstructure, the leaders and political parties, had changed and how much the underlying realities of daily life had remained the same. Yes, quite a few people did manage to inflict a lot of damage with relatively few guns but the only real change on the local scene was that Workhouses became county homes, and there were an awful lot fewer of them.

Ireland's primary role during the war was as a supplier of food, most of it unprocessed and on the hoof, to the British market.

The British government introduced a number of important reforms that greatly improved the quality of life in this country, particularly for the working poor. Of course these were not introduced for our benefit but to win the war. Nevertheless we benefitted all the same.

One was the payment of separation money to the wives and other dependents of serving soldiers. These were quite generous and represented the greatest transfer of wealth to the Dublin tenements in the country's history. By 1918 the second largest source of income in the tenements, after labourers' wages, was separation money which, after 1916, was also paid to unmarried mothers of servicemen's children.

Another, and even more important development, was the introduction of the Committee on Production system, which ensured union recognition. The rhetoric of Jim Larkin, the writings and martyrdom of James Connolly, the ideology of the syndicalist movement, the organising zeal of William O'Brian, James Everett and others all played a role in the development of the Irish labour movement but the greatest factor of all was the Committee on Production system.

We all know about the great Dublin Lockout of 1913 but relatively few Irish people realise it was part of the 'Great Unrest', a great surge in industrial militancy in Britain between 1910 and 1914. When war came the Liberal government knew it could not fight Germany abroad and the Labour movement at home simultaneously so it introduced a system of industrial arbitration.

The scheme was restricted to war sensitive sectors such as shipyards, railways, munitions and engineering plants but these set benchmarks for the wider economy. In Ireland there were relatively few such industries and those that did exist were marginal to the British war effort. The one sector where Ireland did have an important role to play was in the provision of food.

By 1917 the disturbed state of the country was having its effect and the British government established the Agricultural Wages Board. This was a system where farmers' organisations and workers' organisations could come together under a government appointed chairman to negotiate on pay and conditions. Agricultural labourers flocked to the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union and, within a couple of years, trade union membership on this island rose from 100,000 to 270,000, with the ITGWU accounting for half of the total.

Year	ITUC	ITGWU
1916	120,000	5,000
1917	150,000	25,000
1918	250,000	68,827
1919	270,000	102,419
1920	229,000	120,000
1921	196,000	69,560
1922	189,000	82,243
1923	183,000	89,000
1924	175,000	67,000
1932	95,000	14,123

In Britain, where there was a much larger industrial base, trade union membership still rose from four million to eight and growth was especially strong amongst women workers, many of them wives and mothers employed for the first time outside the home. This phenomenon was less widespread in Ireland. Nevertheless it did happen in sectors such as the railways and munitions. Indeed the munitions industry was almost exclusively female and women were found to be much more productive than their male counterparts. At the same time traditional Irish industries such as brewing and distilling were discouraged and, from 1916, many distilleries were forced to convert to industrial alcohol production. Companies such as Guinness and Jameson's encouraged employees to join the British Army not just out of a sense of patriotism, but because they had workforces surplus to requirements.

The war and the hardships it inflicted on the civilian population also bred political radicalism. But whereas it tended to be class based in Britain, in Ireland the central driving force outside of the North-East was nationalism. This was a common phenomenon we shared with much of Europe. In large urban based societies the vehicle of anti-war sentiment tended to be socialism or communism. In predominantly peasant societies, like Ireland, whose political and economic life had often been stifled by imperial governments, it was militant nationalism. Rather than regard ourselves as somehow unique we should realise we were part of a wider movement that created the many successor states to emerge from the break-up of the great European empires.

Britain dragged Ireland into a war not of its making, much as Finns, Czechs, Poles and other nationalities were also forced to fight by their imperial masters, because the European ruling elite was too incompetent to prevent mutual conflict or deal intelligently with the rising forces of socialism, nationalism and feminism. John Redmond, who was tied hand and foot to the Liberal alliance had no choice but to support the

British war effort if he was to have any hope of securing Home Rule. He also believed genuinely in the British Empire and wanted Ireland to have a greater share in the benefits of imperial exploitation of the colonies. Unfortunately for him, when the war proved neither short, nor glorious, the Irish Party was blamed as much as the British for dragging us into this unmitigated disaster.

Which brings me back to my letter. I still believe the Great War saved us from a far worse bloodbath than the one we might have experienced in the revolutionary decade. Whether it would have cost the 35,000 Irish lives that were lost abroad, who can say? What we can be fairly sure of is that it would not only have cost the lives of several more thousand combatants than was the case in Ireland between 1916 and 1923, but multiples of those figures in terms of civilians killed; not to mention property destroyed.

I have conflicting views and emotions when I reflect on the Great War and on the Second World War. My grandfather served in the British army and so did my father, like countless other unskilled Dublin working class men of those generations. I myself was in the republican movement for many years, hence having the honour of knowing Tomas MacGiolla. I was in Belfast in August 1971 when internment was introduced. I saw the same army in operation there and it was not a very edifying state, which is not to say they had an easy job. At least they didn't call in air strikes on the Lower Falls to save themselves casualties.

But of course the British army that served in Northern Ireland was not the army that fought in the Second World War, which was in turn very different from the army that fought the First World War. Institutions are deeply affected by the societies in which they exist. I grew up mainly in England and I have to say that in the aftermath of the Second World War very few people spoke about the First. It was almost as if it was such a terrible experience that everyone wanted to forget it. It was not until 1964, the fiftieth anniversary of its outbreak, that it regained a central place in British public consciousness. It was an honest attempt to look at the realities of modern warfare, less sanitised than before, but the focus on the front line seemed to legitimise the irredeemable through the concept of heroic sacrifice. But I think we have to ask heroic sacrifice for what? The Hohenzollern, Tsarist, Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman and British empires that mobilised the vast majority of combatants no longer exist.

It is often said that the First World War was a war that should never have been fought and the Second World War, its poisoned legacy, was a war that had to be fought, and won, if European civilisation was to survive in however mutilated a form. The spirit of 1945 was very different from the spirit of 1914, and I would argue that the historic compromise

between capital and labour that helped create 30 years of growth after 1945 and greater social equality than ever before in Europe might be more worthy of examination than the bloody carnage of 1914; but the tyranny of commemoration dictates otherwise.

In Ireland debate is further inhibited by the Peace Process, which means we are afraid to tell hard truths in case they offend the imagined pasts of others. Instead we often indulge sentimental but still potentially lethal mythologies.

The main lesson I draw from 1914 is that if you give a lot of people guns and convince them they have good reasons to use them, a lot of other people will die.



*Back: John Bradley, Michael Gaynor, George Beatty, George Elliott, John Hulme,
Pat McGuigan, Johnny Dooher, Pat Devlin, J. J. Woods
Front: Bridgeen Rutherford, Bridie Bradley, Anne Breen, Ella Brown, Doreen McBride*

MILITANT UNIONISM IN THE SOUTH AND WEST OF IRELAND IN THE ERA OF HOME RULE



QUINCEY DOUGAN

In 1886 the muster roll of an Orange anti-Home Rule Army was released to newspapers across the British Isles and Empire. In its 4th Division three Dublin battalions were listed, along with regiments and cavalry troops from Wicklow, Cork, Sligo and Kings County; totalling almost 4,000 men. From the first mention of Home Rule there was a significant Unionist presence in the South of Ireland willing to go further than politics. The events of the Third Home Rule Crisis are now largely in the public domain; however one of the most often ignored parties to the dispute are these militant southern Irish Unionists.

In the 'heart' of the south, Dublin City, in 1911 just under 20% of the population was Protestant. In all just over 100,000 Protestants lived within County Dublin including the city. It should be no surprise then that Dublin was a prime breeding ground for militant Loyalism.

In June 1935 a Dublin Board of Works employee was among a group working in part of the Dublin GPO who uncovered a large cavity several feet long. Within it, in perfectly dry conditions, laid a massive arms cache. He had discovered over 90 rifles and over 2000 rounds of ammunition. The weapons had belonged to the men of Dublin's 'Ulster Volunteer Force', the Loyal Dublin Volunteers. Prior to being forced out by the IRA the building had been one of Dublin's several Orange Halls.

In November 1913 the city hosted a mass anti- Home Rule demonstration. The run up to the rally, probably quite deliberately, saw another announcement through the print media. Headed 'Dublin Volunteer Corps', the *Irish Times* of 10th November stated: 'While Ulster is preparing to resist Home Rule by force of arms if necessary... the spirit of militarism that has gripped that province and fired the

enthusiasm of its young manhood is also at work in Dublin'. The Loyal Dublin Volunteers was formed.

The goal was stated as primarily being to preserve the 'civil and religious liberties of Protestants in Dublin and the South' but more ominously it also mentioned 'Civil War'. In such event the men would be ready for 'service'. At its peak the L.D.V. boasted a membership of some 2000 men divided into two battalions, with the majority of volunteers Dublin born and bred. From mid 1913 right up until the outbreak of the First World War the unit was drilling weekly under the overall command of Colonel Henry Maxwell, Grand Master of the Dublin Orange Order.

Probably the most unlikely centre of militant Unionist activity was within the province of Connacht. Despite being the least Protestant province- in 1914 only 4% were of a Protestant identity- Connacht, like elsewhere, still had several areas where the Protestant population was concentrated, namely Sligo and Leitrim. At almost 15% Protestant in Sligo Borough (10% Sligo County) Sligo Town unionism was relatively populous in relation to the rest of the province.

A report from a special correspondent in the *Irish Times* on the strength of the U.V.F. stated that there were 'about 2000' Unionist volunteers in Sligo, 'similar to that in Cavan'. Without doubt the claim was vastly exaggerated, but it does suggest some organisation was in place. Little physical evidence remains of Sligo unionists drilling in 1913 and early 1914; however IRA Volunteer Eugene Gilbride stated in an interview in the 1950's that there was an 'Ulster Volunteer Branch in Sligo' and that the IRA believed they had arms. The existence of a Sligo anti- Home Rule corps was further underlined in December 1921, when arms and ammunition were discovered by workmen at a former Protestant school building. It was acknowledged that the arms dump had been the property of the Sligo 'Ulster Volunteers'.

While the existence of a Sligo Unionist volunteer corps requires an element of conjecture, no such element is needed when referring to the Ulster Volunteer Force of Leitrim. Despite no locally sympathetic press, Cavan nationalist newspaper, the *Anglo-Celt*, does report on the activity of the men on several occasions and the County Inspector of the Royal Irish Constabulary mentioned the men in his monthly reports. In January 1914 he noted that four branches of the U.V.F. in Leitrim had been inspected, namely those districts that straddled the Leitrim Cavan border, including Killegar, Portlongfield, Macken and Derrylane.

Another unlikely home for 'Ulster Volunteers' during the period was County Louth. Omeath and Carlingford had active Orange Lodges at the time and local Ulster Volunteers are recorded as attending manoeuvres in south Down across Carlingford Lough several times. Deep in the

south of the county, the hamlet of Collon near Drogheda was the home of an Orange Lodge and had at least 28 enrolled Ulster Volunteers.

County Longford has a long militant Orange heritage, and its Unionism was equally militant. In his statement to the Bureau of Military History, General Sean McEoin who had been the Officer in command of the North Longford I.R.A., stated that across County Longford there had been several active units of the 'U.V.F.' formed, including in his own area of Balinalee.

In January 1914 the *Meath Chronicle* reported that a branch of the Ulster Volunteer Force had been established 'somewhere near Headfort'. According to Councillor Lawlor, it had been brought into existence by some 'God forgotten nincompoops' and encouraged the people of Kells to form a branch of the Irish Volunteers to show them that they are ready to 'fight and die for their country'.

Strong circumstantial evidence exists to indicate that there were similar corps elsewhere across the southern counties as well. Brief mentions appear in the press of both a Loyal Wicklow Volunteers and a Loyal Cork Volunteers.

The nature of these militant bodies of units across Ireland, in terms of their minority status and fears of boycott and repercussions for their actions, combined with the mass exodus of Protestants from the Free State in the following decades, has meant that relatively little information remains in the public domain on their activities. What survives, however, shows the depth of feeling that the maintenance of Union provoked - feelings that were manifested in preparations to fight.



A RATION PARTY OF THE ROYAL IRISH RIFLES IN A COMMUNICATION TRENCH DURING THE BATTLE OF THE SOMME. THE DATE IS BELIEVED TO BE 1 JULY 1916, THE FIRST DAY ON THE SOMME, AND THE UNIT IS POSSIBLY THE 1ST BATTALION, ROYAL IRISH RIFLES (25TH BRIGADE, 8TH DIVISION).
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DR DONAL HALL

In the decades leading up to 1914 nationalist County Louth was riven by bitter factionalism. In the 1892 General Election, Louth's two constituencies returned anti-Parnellite members to Parliament, with Tim Healy and Dr Daniel Ambrose taking the North Louth and South Louth respectively. Pro-Parnellite Joseph Nolan took South Louth in 1900 while Tim Healy remained firmly ensconced in North Louth until the second general election of 1910, when the local Catholic Church leaders backed the Redmondite candidate, Richard Hazleton. By 1914, particularly in North Louth where only a handful of votes separated the parties, Redmondites and Healyites had built up efficient and muscular political organisations, and their mutual loathing was liable to spill over into street violence.

During the period 1912-1914, the local press, overwhelmingly pro-Redmond, denounced schismatic nationalist or separatist groups that threatened, however unlikely the threat was in reality, to undermine the inevitable victory for Home Rule. Those Unionist who opposed Home Rule in principle were given short shrift. While Nationalist Irish claims to be a people distinct from the rest of the population of Great Britain was the basis of the drive towards Home Rule, Ulster Unionist arguments that they were a distinct people on the island of Ireland and entitled to separate treatment from the rest of the inhabitants of the island was not conceded..

Ulster Unionists were preparing to resist Home Rule, by force if necessary, and in early 1913 the Ulster Volunteer Force was established. It was in response to the growing threat from the UVF that the Irish National Volunteers (IV) were founded in Dublin on 25 November 1913 to defend Home Rule. An enrolment meeting was held in Dundalk on Sunday 22 February 1914, with leadership drawn from Healyite and Redmondite supporters, as well as cultural groups with Nationalist leanings.

On the night of 24 April 1914 the UVF caused a sensation by landing large quantities of arms in Larne, Bangor and Donaghadee. Subsequently it was reported that the AOH had made a determined effort to organise the INV and as a result the membership in Louth increased from 280 to 1,898 in May 1914.¹ John Redmond moved to gain control of the Volunteer movement in June 1914, by forcing it, under threat of splitting the organisation, to accept his nominees onto its organising committee. As a result of his coup, membership of the Volunteers soared, and by August 1914 the R.I.C reported that the County Louth membership of the INV was 4,869.²

With the passing of the Home Rule Bill through the Lords in July 1914 - where a clause allowing for the permanent exclusion of all of Ulster was inserted, Ireland was on the precipice of Civil War. On 26 July the British Army shot dead three civilians, a fourth died later, and wounded thirty-two, during disturbances in Dublin that followed the importation of arms by the Irish National Volunteers at Howth. Drawing inevitable comparisons to the inaction of the authorities during the UVF arms smuggling, this caused outrage amongst Nationalists.

On 2 August, the German army invaded Luxembourg and Belgium. On the following day, 3 August, in the House of Commons, Foreign Minister Grey expounded the British case for intervention in a European war. Redmond's reaction was to pledge the services of the Irish National Volunteers for the defence of Ireland, and he urged the British government to concentrate their army on attacking Germany. This pledge was, according to the *Dundalk Democrat*, 'a splendid day's work for Ireland.'³

War between Britain and Germany was formally declared on 4 August 1914. The next day, 100 men from the Castlebellingham INV accompanied by the Armagh Pipers Band turned out at the railway station to see off two of their number who had been called up for service. As the train pulled out, the Volunteers cheered and sang 'Come back to Erin'. The 28th Brigade, Royal Field Artillery (RFA) occupying Dundalk barracks was mobilized and headed for France on the night of 20 August 1914 escorted to the train station by friends and a company of buglers from the Irish National Volunteers. The presence of the buglers caused a bitter and violent split in the Dundalk Volunteers, and those who left the INV as a result of this were to form the nucleus of the 100 Volunteers from Louth who participated in the Easter Rebellion in 1916.

When recruiting offices were opened in Dundalk and Drogheda, the RIC noted the slow rate at which recruits were coming in. Scarcely any

¹ CICMR, April May 1914.

² CICMR August 1914

³ *Dundalk Democrat*, 8 August, 1914

improvement was noted in September 1914, even though feeling against Germany was strong. It also reported that scarcely a single member of the Louth INV had enlisted. It has to be said, therefore, that Redmond's speech at Woodenbridge in September 1914 appealing to the volunteers to take their places in the firing line, was singularly unsuccessful. The lack of war enthusiasm by the Redmondite Volunteers moreover is an indicator that most volunteers in Louth simply walked away from the organisation after August 1914.

During the course of the war, Redmond's political support remained firm. In a by-election in North Louth held in February 1916, the IPP candidate, P.J. Whitty, was successful, gaining 2,299 votes, while his Healyite opponent, Bernard Hamill polled 1,810 votes. Despite the fact that the war had been in progress for eighteen months at this stage, and despite the reservations in relation to Redmond's war policy, the integrity of the political division in county Louth remained as real in 1916 as it had in 1892.

By December 1918 the face of elections nationally, and in Louth in particular, had changed considerably. Firstly County Louth was now one constituency, all males over the age of 21, and property-owning women over the age of 35 could vote for the first time. Soldiers over 18 years of age on active service could register to vote in their home constituency and were recorded on the Absent Voters List (AVL). Incomplete figures revealed that at least 1,026 servicemen were on the AVL. Out of a total electorate in Louth of approximately 28,630, over 1,000 votes would be accounted for by servicemen, and 10,000 by women.⁴

On polling day, the total turn-out was 21,285 (74%). JJ O'Kelly for Sinn Féin received 10,770 votes while Richard Hazleton received 10,315, a majority of 255 (1.19%) to O'Kelly. Nationalism in Louth was as evenly split in the 1918 general election as it had been since 1892. It is a reasonable conclusion that Sinn Féin replaced the Healyites as the main political opposition to the IPP in Louth. The true significance of this election in Louth was the level of support that the IPP retained. The IPP not only retained its support in Louth but increased it in proportion to the extension of the franchise.

Post War tensions

It has been estimated that the number of County Louth-born men who participated in the Great War was in excess of 2,400, of whom at least 820 were killed.⁵

Ex-soldiers and their organisations were a recognisable group within Louth society, and there can be no doubt that some would have found reason to object to the veterans' very presence in Louth, never mind the

⁴ *Dundalk Democrat*, 2 Nov. 1918

⁵ Donal Hall, *World War 1 and nationalist politics in County Louth 1914 – 1920* (Dublin 2005), p. 34

fact that they very publicly organised parades and commemorations. It is surprising, given the history of factionist violence in Louth, that this antipathy rarely spilled over into attacks on serving or former soldiers. The headlines will show that ten ex-soldiers were killed in Louth between 1919 and 1924: however only in one case, that of Henry Murray who was shot in Dundalk in 1921, is there a question of whether his previous army service played a role in his killing.

One of the first memorials built was in St. Nicholas' Church of Ireland in Dundalk. On 1 July 1919 a brass tablet was erected commemorating twenty-seven of their parishioners who had been killed in the war. In Castlebellingham a memorial cross was dedicated on 7 February 1920, in an impressive ceremony officiated at by Cardinal Logue, Roman Catholic Primate of All Ireland. The memorial carries the names of 51 local men who died during the war. A memorial obelisk in the grounds of Collon Church of Ireland includes on it the name of James Emerson, from Collon, who won the Victoria Cross in 1918.

The Drogheda war memorial carries the names of 372 men from Drogheda and Meath who died in the Great War.

The peaceful nature of the commemoration ceremonies that took place in Drogheda and Dundalk, up to 1940, were in stark relief to the violence that accompanied memorial services held in Dublin. Whether it was intended or not, the ceremonies in Dublin had become increasingly politicised and confrontational, with the presence of British Fascists; the prevalence of the Union Jack and singing of the British national anthem; the locating of the ceremonies around College Green and St. Stephen's Green, amidst statues of William of Orange, Trinity College and other reminders of the imperial past. The Irish Free State had just achieved a level of independence, and had fought a bitter Civil War with former comrades largely over disagreements on imperialist symbolism. The prevalence of imperial symbols at the ceremonies in Dublin made it difficult if not impossible for most Free State politicians to attend. It could be that the nature of the ceremonies made them readily acceptable in Louth, a county where political or other disagreements could and did lead to confrontation and violence. It could also be simply that the people of Louth held no animus towards the ex-soldiers and vice versa, and people got on with their lives.

‘IT’S A LONG WAY TO TIPPERARY’ – THE SONG AND ITS IMPACT ON THE FIRST WORLD WAR¹



DR. DENIS G. MARNANE

Paradoxically the song most associated with the First World War, was not a First World War song. The division of labour between the credited composers, Jack Judge and Harry Williams, remains unclear. While the song was not written about the place Tipperary, because of the military barracks in that town and a measure of commercial opportunism, song and place began to converge. Three aspects of the ‘Tipperary’ phenomenon, are of particular interest: the origin and rapid appeal of the song, once war began; the very negative reaction of the Establishment and with the name ‘Tipperary’ being attached to a host of objects and causes, the whole process was a fascinating example of branding.

As a music hall performer, Jack Judge had a backlog as distinct from a back catalogue of songs and ‘Tipperary’, a reworking of one of his existing songs, was first performed in Stalybridge, Manchester in January 1912. Over the next two and half years or so, the song achieved a measure of success, thanks to Judge doing the music hall circuit, but everyone, not least Judge, who was in the Isle of Man, when war broke out, was unprepared for the speed with which ‘Tipperary’ caught on.

One is mindful of the Noel Coward observation about the power of cheap music and as many people point out, why a particular song catches on is a mystery. Apart from the fact that crowds could easily join in and troops could happily march to its beat, for a song to become so successful, its words had to mean something. ‘Tipperary’s words spoke of longing, not loss; about the possibility that distance, time and separation will be overcome; that separation is temporary and that the distance between here and there, between home and away, between where you are and what you want – all can be overcome.

Judge's song owes something to Percy French's 'Mountains of Mourne' (1896). In this, there's gold to be dug from the streets of London. In 'Tipperary' the new arrival finds that 'all the streets were paved with gold'. In French's song, 'Mary' is left back home but reassured that London's girls offer no competition. In Judge's song, 'Molly-O' is also back home but the treatment is lighter and the situation is reversed, in that competition is not with girls in London, but from boys back home, especially 'Mike Maloney'.

In August 1914, editors all over the world, starved of news, lapped up the colour piece by a *Daily Mail* reporter, of British troops coming ashore at Boulogne and especially the description of the 2nd battalion of the Connaught Rangers singing 'Tipperary'. A few years previously, this battalion had spent a few years at Tipperary military barracks, so as a name and a place Tipperary was hardly unknown to them. In 1914-15, Tipperary barracks was used to train the 49th brigade of the 16th division, thousands of soldiers, to whom Tipperary meant something. From 1916, Tipperary Command Depot, with the military barracks as its focus, was used to rehabilitate thousands of wounded soldiers.

By war's end, 'Tipperary' was not just a trigger for an emotional response to a period of history, but a kind of aural shorthand for the period itself. Writing about celebrations in London on 11 November 1918, a *Times* correspondent noted how the singing of 'Tipperary' was 'accompanied with nervous laughter and tears, as people remembered the early days of the war and emotion gripped and almost overwhelmed many of them.' Earlier that day, as the war officially ended, at the headquarters of the French army, national anthems were played and then 'Tipperary.'

Within weeks of the outbreak of war, there was interest in the real Tipperary and in the town. Some commercial companies manufacturing milk-based products were quick to identify where their product was made, with the resonance of the song and so advertised, for example, in the New Zealand press. There are instances of VIPs like First Sea Lord Fisher and Baden Powell joking about the Germans finding it a very long way to Tipperary. Apart from toy makers and even novelists trading on the 'Tipperary' name, the word became attached to a well-meaning campaign in England to keep wives of serving soldiers and sailors out of pubs and to provide them with a cosy uplifting alternative. The 'Tipperary League' provided 'Tipperary Rooms' for this work of social redemption. In 1915, at the battle of Jutland, one of the destroyers lost was H.M.S. Tipperary.

From the beginning, in official Britain, there was disquiet about 'Tipperary', a disreputable music hall 'jingle', becoming so identified with British troops. There was consciousness that Germany had a superb musical tradition to call on and that its soldiers sang 'proper songs'. With

some despair, *The Times* noted ‘no one can tell what (British soldiers) will choose to sing or why’. At the end of 1914, in editorials on two successive days, *The Times* tried to figure out the appeal of ‘Tipperary’. The two pieces were headed: ‘Tipperary’: An Expression of Democracy’ and ‘Tipperary’ and Emotional Freedom’.

The leader writers had to be careful; clearly regarding ‘Tipperary’ as rubbish, they had to be mindful that soldiers had taken it to their hearts. One conclusion was that soldiers sang ‘Tipperary’ because they liked it, whereas German songs, while they might be superior, were sung because soldiers were told what to sing. Musical luminaries such as Sir Charles Stanford, professor of music at Cambridge, were brought into the argument, in the hope that something more suitable would catch on. By War’s end, the mysterious appeal of ‘Tipperary’ was still being discussed.

Nothing more clearly illustrates the position of ‘Tipperary’, loved by ordinary soldiers and their ordinary families, hated by stuffshirts, than *The Times* account of a large scale allied concert in Rome in February 1918. In the home of opera and with massed bands of the Guards present, the latter ‘intended to play music but the promoting committee insisted on ‘Tipperary’, with which we are now identified for better or worse.’ Note the implication that ‘Tipperary’ is not music.

¹ This topic is discussed in detail in *Tipperary Historical Journal* (2014).





Some of the attendance at the Seminar, October 11, 2014