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A Land Fit for Heroes?: The Great War, Memory, Popular Culture, and Politics in Ireland Since 1914

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

“A LAND FIT FOR HEROES”?:
THE GREAT WAR, MEMORY, POPULAR CULTURE, AND
POLITICS IN IRELAND SINCE 1914

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN HISTORY

BY

JASON ROBERT MYERS

CHICAGO, IL

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In memory of Janis Lee Myers, who gave me the roots and wings to succeed
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Is maith an scéalaí an aimsir. (Time is a great storyteller.)

Irish Proverb

If you know your history/Then you will know where you coming from.

Bob Marley

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ABSTRACT

Despite the fact that over 200,000 Irish men fought in the British Army during the First World War, Ireland's sizeable contribution to the war remained in the shadows of history for most of the twentieth century. This dissertation examines the cultural components of the memory of the Great War in Ireland and argues that, taken together, they constitute an alternative Irish national identity that threatened and challenged republican nationalism. These cultural components existed in the realm of vernacular memory, which lay beyond the reach of the Irish government. By examining commemorative rituals, war memorials, and popular culture, this project breathes life into the vibrant and complex milieu of Great War memory in Ireland. Studying culture opens new avenues to explore questions relating to nationalism, memory, politics, and war. By tracking the changes to Great War memory throughout the twentieth, and into the twenty-first century, this study illustrates a sustained thread of shared history for all of Ireland, north and south, that transcends religious and political barriers and injects Ireland into a broader European context.

INTRODUCTION

THE GREAT WAR AND MEMORY IN IRISH CULTURE

A few moments of clear skies managed to break up the monotony of the dull and dreary rain showers on the morning of 11 November 1929 in Belfast, Northern Ireland. On this day, thousands gathered at Belfast's City Hall to pay their annual respects to the dead of the First World War.¹ This was not a typical Remembrance Day in Belfast, as the day was punctuated by the unveiling of the Belfast City War Memorial. Dignitaries from Northern Ireland and Britain were on hand for the dedication of the towering, thirty-foot cenotaph. Carved into the face of the monument, the phrase "PRO DEO ET PATRIA" succinctly summed up the sentiment most Northern Irish Protestants felt about their role in the First World War, a sentiment that continued to color the memory of the war throughout the twentieth century.

The memory of the First World War in Ireland carried with it associations with religion and national identity. Protestant northerners showed strong support for Great Britain in the war as an act of validation for the existence of a Unionist northern identity so the choice of inscription on the Belfast war memorial comes as little surprise. In the south, the memory of the First World War met resistance from republicans who possessed a different perspective on what constituted the Irish "patria" from that of Irish ex-servicemen or Northern Irish unionists. Of course, these attitudes were not

¹ *Belfast Telegraph*, 11 November 1929.

predetermined. Events at home and abroad during the First World War and its immediate aftermath had a significant impact on the way the Irish remembered, or forgot, the Great War.

At least 210,000 Irishmen served in the British Army during the First World War.² When most of these men left for the front they were viewed as defenders of small nations and their native land. By war's end, fissures in Irish society meant that sacrifices made during the war received different levels of recognition in the north and in the south. Across most of the island Irish soldiers did not, upon their return home, encounter the "land fit for heroes" promised by British Prime Minister David Lloyd George. The governments in Northern and Southern Ireland shaped an official memory of the First World War that reified their political agendas and advocated variant forms of separation. The North openly honored war memory, employing commemoration to separate that region from the south. In the Free State, Republicans purposely tried to erase memory of the war, something that they in part succeeded in doing. As a result, Ireland's participation in the war succumbed to what has been called "collective amnesia" and Irish history became devoid of an event that would challenge the separation of Ireland from the United Kingdom accomplished in 1922. The politics of separation associated with each government helped to define each "national" polity. By no fault of their own most of the contributions and sacrifices to the war effort made by Irish soldiers and civilians in the south were pushed to the margins of national memory because it was almost impossible

² David Fitzpatrick, "Militarism in Ireland, 1900-1922," in *A Military History of Ireland*, ed. Thomas Bartlett and Keith Jeffery (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 388.

to dissociate the experiences of the men who fought from the politics of independence after the nationalist cause tore away their ties with the United Kingdom.

Forgetting the war in the south, however, was a gradual process. The largest events commemorating the First World War in Ireland occurred in major cities like Dublin and Belfast. In Dublin, the government allowed these events to take place, but did not participate in an official capacity. Conversely, in Belfast these activities took place under the supervision of the region's central government. State commemorations in the North tended to focus on the predominantly Protestant 36th (Ulster) Division and their role in the Battle of the Somme in 1916. In the Free State, the government contributed funding toward building a war memorial dedicated to all Irish veterans in the 1920s, but it remained unfinished and officially closed until the 1990s. State-sponsored remembrance of the war in both northern and southern Ireland was politically charged and exclusionary. Across Ireland other forms of commemoration also carried political connotations, but remembrance that occurred on a local level and sponsored by local citizens was more likely to accommodate a broader spectrum of political and religious affiliations. In essence, Ireland experienced at least two different dominant types of memory. The first, official memory, primarily existed in the north and functioned in a top-down manner and was shaped by the government to fit their specific needs. However, the second type of memory, vernacular memory, operated beyond the direct influence of the government and developed in a bottom-up fashion.³ Especially in the south, the absence of official commemoration of the war forced ex-servicemen and the relatives of

³ John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the twentieth century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991).

the deceased to turn to non-governmental organizations to pay proper homage to those who served in the Great War. Vernacular memory in the south challenged the official memory of the war, which was almost non-existent. Men from across Ireland served in the Great War and as a result Irish vernacular memory of the war crossed political, sectarian, and class borders. As a result, groups and individuals were able to retain the ability to create their own practices and rituals for remembering and commemorating the First World War. The centrality of vernacular memory in perpetuating remembrance of the Great War in Ireland is one of the central arguments of this project. Not only did World War I facilitate a shared if muted desire to recognize the human catastrophe experienced by the Irish in the war, but also this desire found its greatest expression in Irish popular culture. The present analysis of vernacular remembrance challenges the way that governments in Ireland appropriated the memory of the war and used it to bolster their political positions. Similarly, examining the contrast between vernacular and official memory challenges most of the past scholarship on the memory of the Great War in Ireland.

The existence of, and persistent tension between official and vernacular memory are critical to understanding how the memory of the First World War developed and evolved in Ireland. The use of memory as a tool for historical analysis is a recent development and remains an evolving methodology. What, exactly, constitutes memory is critically important to this sub-field of history. *Lieux de mémoire*, a term coined by French historian Pierre Nora, literally translates to “places of memory,” describes the

“material, symbolic, and functional” qualities of an object or event.⁴ When viewed through this lens, statues, monuments, buildings, celebrations, festivals, rituals, and traditions all become aspects of memory.

Memory functions as a specific transmission of past events that differs from history. The principle difference between history and memory is that history presents a selective and organized version of the past whereas memory preserves the past in its entirety.⁵ Generational transmission, where each generation receives memories from the previous one with an understanding of, and context for those memories, allows subsequent generations to understand the past faster and more efficiently, which contributes to an ever-expanding gap between history and memory.⁶ Memory, therefore, is akin to a living organism, one that is susceptible to remembering and forgetting, unaware of its structure or limits, and affected in its use by external forces. History, on the other hand, is a progressive reinterpretation of the past. History is “always problematic and incomplete,” because it provides a specific interpretation of the past while memory represents one’s perception of reality. Memory represents what is (or was); history represents what no longer exists.⁷ Furthermore, memory and history cater to divergent interests. Memory has the capacity to represent both the individual and the collective, where the collective is a specific group that can lay claim to the shared

⁴ Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*,” translated by Marc Roudebush, *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989), 18-19.

⁵ Nora, “Between Memory and History,” 8.

⁶ Matt K. Matsuda, *The Memory of the Modern* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 9-10.

⁷ Nora, “Between Memory and History,” 8.

memory. Conversely, history represents a collective interest, one that can be approached, interpreted, and refuted by any individual or group.⁸

Memory's malleability, however, makes it vulnerable to external forces. As collective memory evolves it begins to fragment and fracture. The development of competing memories forces those who study memory to be precise in how they define different aspects of memory. John Bodnar provides a useful framework for studying the ways different types of memory intersect where official memory is juxtaposed to vernacular memory. Official memory is shaped by cultural leaders throughout a given society and "relies on 'dogmatic formalism' and the restatement of reality in ideal rather than complex or ambiguous terms. It presents the past on an abstract basis of timelessness and sacredness." Vernacular memory, on the other hand, functions as "an array of specialized interests that are grounded in parts of the whole." Vernacular memory depends on local differences and the way that groups in different areas represent their memories of a given event. In this cultural situation different strands of memory can come into conflict with each other. Regardless of the outcome of different vernacular memories jostling for supremacy they are often viewed as "threatening and oppositional" by proponents of official memory because their "ultimate aim [is] to serve a subculture rather than the regime."⁹ This situation holds true for the Irish memory of the Great War. Most notably during the inter-war period, the memory of the Great War had an advantage over other emerging narratives in Ireland in that it had the backing of a large number of

⁸ Ibid, 9.

⁹ Bodnar, 13-14, 245-246.

people who more or less shared a common experience and interest. This is markedly different from the republican nationalist experience during the inter-war period, which had a weaker collective memory of the Easter Rising because the fissures that opened up between different groups during the Irish Civil War needed to be reconciled before Irish cultural leaders in the south could consolidate and strengthen their national history.¹⁰

Irish Politics and the Great War: A Brief Overview

To understand the reason for the Free State's ambivalence toward the involvement of Ireland's Irish National Volunteers in the First World War requires a quick recap of the contemporary political situation. On 25 May 1914, the Third Home Rule Bill¹¹ received its third reading in the House of Commons, needing only royal assent to become law. After a generation of peaceful, democratic political engagement the Irish Parliamentary Party was on the cusp of obtaining independence for Ireland, something that had eluded hundreds of years of violent revolutionaries and patriots. Yet, there was a cloud on the horizon of Irish independence. Despite the fact that the Home Rule Bill passed through the appropriate democratic channels, it bill elicited the threat of violence from the Protestant dominated counties of Ulster, who demanded exclusion from the proposed Home Rule state. Tensions between Home Rulers in southern Ireland and

¹⁰ See Anne Dolan, *Commemorating the Irish Civil War: History and Memory, 1923-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), and David Fitzpatrick, "Commemoration in the Irish Free State: a chronicle of embarrassment," in *History and memory in modern Ireland*, ed. Ian McBride (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 184-203.

¹¹ Home Rule would effectively end British control over the daily operations of Irish government allowing the Irish to rule themselves in matters of domestic affairs; Ireland remained part of the British Commonwealth and Britain maintained control over international affairs for Ireland. In Northern Ireland, the problem with Home Rule was that the Protestant majority there did not want to be controlled by a Catholic government from Dublin; they feared that government in Catholic hands would have an adverse effect on Ulster's Protestant population.

Ulster Unionists put Ireland on the brink of civil war in 1914.¹² In the south, John Redmond of the Irish Parliamentary Party was the leader of the Irish nationalist movement and he enjoyed the support of the majority of the Irish people. When the continent erupted into conflict in August 1914, both Redmond and Unionist leader Edward Carson jumped at the opportunity to fight and pledged men from their respective paramilitary groups, the Irish National Volunteers and the Ulster Volunteer Force, to the British army with the expectation that each would comprise a division in the new army.¹³ Redmond believed that joining the fight would ensure the implementation of Home Rule after the war, while Carson viewed participation as a real demonstration of loyalty to the United Kingdom that would earn Ulster an exclusion from Home Rule.¹⁴

The British War Office's response to each leader's proposed Irish National Volunteers involvement was markedly different. Lord Kitchener, the Secretary of State for War in Britain was skeptical of Redmond and the Irish nationalists' motives and rejected Redmond's proposal that the northern and southern paramilitary forces be recognized as Territorial detachments for home defense. Likewise, Redmond's successive suggestion "to form an Irish Brigade with officers vetted by the Volunteer leadership" was rebuffed by Kitchener and the War Office. Carson fared better with the

¹² David and Josephine Howie, "Irish Recruiting and the Home Rule Crisis of August-September 1914," in *Strategy and Intelligence: British Policy During The First World War*, ed. Michael Dockrill and David French (London and Rio Grande: The Hambledon Press, 1996), 3-4.

¹³ Tensions in Ireland over Home Rule began long before the summer of 1914. In 1912, Ulster Unionists established the Ulster Volunteer Force, a paramilitary group dedicated to defending the ideals of the Unionist community. A southern Irish paramilitary group soon emerged as response to the creation of the Ulster Volunteer Force. By mid-1914, immediately before the outbreak of the First World War the number of recruits in the Irish National Volunteers numbered 150,000 men while the Ulster Volunteer Force consisted of about 100,000 men. Fitzpatrick, "Militarism in Ireland, 1900-1922," 383-386.

¹⁴ Fitzpatrick, "Militarism in Ireland, 1900-1922," 386.

War Office and the Ulster Volunteer Force was given the responsibility of organizing and officering the newly created 36th (Ulster) Division.¹⁵ The War Office eventually created the 10th (Irish) and 16th (Irish) Divisions for southern Ireland. Large numbers of men from the Ulster Volunteer Force and the Irish National Volunteers were used to fill the ranks of the 36th (Ulster) Division and the 16th (Irish) Division, respectively. In the south, Redmond's commitment of the Irish National Volunteers to the British army prompted the small republican faction within the Irish National Volunteers to split off and abstain from following his call to arms. Redmond could have never predicted that this political maneuver would be the first in a series that distanced the majority of Ireland's military from the national cause. Ensuing events ensured that the much smaller Republican military organizations, such as the IRA, became the champions of Irish independence and not the Irish men who fought in the British army during the Great War.

Nevertheless, given the political proclivities in Ireland at the outbreak of the war Irish soldiers were heralded for going to fight in the north and the south. By committing the men of the Irish National Volunteers to fight in the war, Redmond inextricably tied them to the Irish Parliamentary Party's national cause, and the willingness of Irish men to volunteer solidified this relationship. At this point in 1914 and early 1915 opposition to the Irish National Volunteers' involvement in the war came from a very small, but vocal, group of Irish republicans. This group of political dissidents would benefit greatly from the fallout of the Easter Rising in April 1916. In the front lines, nationalist and unionist Irish officers alike were shocked and appalled by the events of the rising, and most referred to the entire episode as a "stab in the back." These sentiments emerged once

¹⁵ Fitzpatrick, "Militarism in Ireland, 1900-1922," 386, 388.

officers accumulated more information because accurate details of the rising were slow to reach the front during wartime. In fact, some of the earliest responses to the rising from men on active duty overseas expressed anger toward the Germans and Roger Casement and failed to mention Patrick Pearse, James Connolly, or the other rising leaders specifically.¹⁶

The Rising itself did little to sway the hearts and minds of most Irish people, but the tide of Irish political opinion turned decisively when in the wake of the rising the British executed its captured leaders. Irish political support for Home Rule and the Irish Parliamentary Party rapidly declined following the post-rising executions. The change in political perception of war service is well illustrated by the reaction to the executions of Captain Thomas Kettle. He was a former MP from East Tyrone, the first Professor of national economics at University College Dublin, a member of the National Volunteers. At the time of the Easter Rebellion he was serving in the 9th Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers. Kettle recognized the rising as a watershed moment in Irish history, stating: “These men will go down to history as heroes and martyrs and I will go down – if I go down at all – as a bloody British officer.”¹⁷ Shortly after making this observation Kettle was killed in combat at Ginchy on the Western Front. Clearly some Irish soldiers at the front knew of, and understood the implications of the Easter Rising. For the thousands of

¹⁶ Jane Leonard, “The Reaction of Irish Officers in the British Army to the Easter Rising of 1916,” in *Facing Armageddon: The First World War Experienced*, Hugh P. Cecil and Peter H. Liddle, ed., (London: Leo Cooper, 1996), 259, 262.

Roger Casement was an Irish officer in the British army and an Irish Republican. During the war he worked with the German government in an effort to try to secure their aid in the Irish independence movement and attempted to recruit Irish prisoners of war in Germany to form an Irish Brigade to fight against the British.

¹⁷ Leonard, “The Reaction of Irish Officers,” 256.

men who left Ireland in 1914 and 1915 with the open approval of their political leaders and fellow citizens, the ground was shifting under their feet in the middle of the war. This change proved critical in shaping the memory of the First World War in succeeding years as republicans claimed that Irish Great War veterans fought for the wrong national cause. The new “national cause” gained legitimacy in Ireland in the general election in December 1918, when Sinn Fein, the Irish Republican political organization, dominated at the polls. Sinn Fein’s electoral victory signaled the death of Home Rule and the IPP and set in motion a series of events that would alter Ireland’s political, social, economic, and cultural landscape for decades.

In spite of these changes within Ireland, the inter-war period saw more attention given to veterans and the memory of the war than any successive period. At this time the newly independent Irish Free State was busy trying to consolidate power and to stabilize the country. The presence of at least 100,000 British ex-servicemen in Ireland made them a difficult constituency to ignore.¹⁸ With the war fresh in people’s minds Ireland’s participation in that conflict provided a number of problems to the emerging Irish Free State. The presence of Irish veterans of the British army served as a constant reminder to all Irish people of the complexity of Ireland’s recent history. Because a pluralistic national history was not conducive to early twentieth century nation building, the lack of a single historical narrative in Ireland meant that the Great War and its inherent association with Ireland’s colonial past seriously threatened the Irish Free State. From 1922-1932, W. T. Cosgrave and Cumann na nGaedhael led the Irish Free State.

¹⁸ Jane Leonard, “Survivors,” in *Our War: Ireland and the Great War*, John Horne, ed., (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2008), 211.

Cosgrave's government made very few proactive interventions on behalf of the Free State's ex-service community yet, they were content to let Irish veterans carry on their commemorative activities as long as they did not make burdensome demands on the government. This changed with the ascension of Fianna Fail and Eamon de Valera to power in 1932, at which time the Free State government actively began to restrict and to deny the requests of the ex-service community. De Valera's decision to keep Ireland neutral during the Second World War signified the end of an era as it symbolically severed the long relationship between Ireland and the British army. Thousands of Irishmen enlisted in the British army during the Second World War, but they did so on their own volition. No longer would the Irish Free State government encourage its citizens to join a foreign military and those who had done so in the past all but vanished from official state memory.

Irish Participation in the First World War

Much difficulty surrounds ascertaining exactly how many Irish men served in the British army during the war because many records were destroyed as a result of bombing campaigns over England during the Second World War. For most of the twentieth century the number of Irish men who served in the war was estimated at anywhere from 300,000-500,000, depending on the source; ex-service organizations generally claimed the number to be between 300,000-350,000. Not until the late twentieth century did historians attempt to compile more accurate data. David Fitzpatrick's number of 210,000 is credited with being the most accurate tabulation to date, but even that is likely a low figure. Fitzpatrick includes reservists and new volunteers in all branches of service in his

calculations, but he limited his analysis to men from Ireland who enlisted there. The paucity of accurate records makes it difficult to calculate fully the number of Irish men who joined up in Britain. Because he ignores these volunteers Fitzgerald's number is probably too low. Irish journalist Kevin Myers estimates the total number of Irish combatants, those who enlisted in Ireland or abroad, at 350,000 or more. Regardless of whose numbers one elects to use, Myers also points out that the total number of adult men in Ireland aged 19-41 was estimated at 550,000 in 1915.¹⁹ In addition to this, Irish volunteers had a rejection rate of forty-two percent by January 1916, which accounted for an estimated 40,000 men.²⁰ As a proportion of the eligible male population, Ireland contributed a huge number of men over the course of the war, and all without the implementation of conscription.²¹

Similar to the difficulties surrounding the tabulation of total Irish enlistments in the First World War, the contributions for the cities of Dublin, Cork, Derry, and Belfast prove difficult to determine. Because of the structure of military recruitment in Ireland,

¹⁹ Patrick Casey gives the male population of Ireland as 1,186,908, with 322,905 from the 26 counties of the contemporary Republic and 864,003 for the North. However, Casey does not provide a year from which the data was taken and uses a larger dataset that includes men aged 15-54 years. Given Ireland's history of emigration it should come as no surprise that the numbers increase dramatically when the age criterion is expanded in both directions since Ireland's population tended to have more young and elderly than middle aged individuals; Patrick J. Casey, "Irish Casualties in the First World War," *Irish Sword* 20 (1997), 195.

²⁰ Patrick Callan, "Recruiting for the British army in Ireland during the first world war," *Irish Sword*, 17 (1987-88), 56. According to Callan, medical reasons, especially "dental deficiencies," were major contributors to the high Irish rejection rate.

²¹ Fitzpatrick, "Militarism in Ireland," 388; *Irish Times* 15 November 1982.

The British Government passed conscription measures for Ireland in 1918, but they army never followed through with the program. Fear helped to improve recruiting numbers in Ireland from men who tried to get a jump on conscription, but the number of new enlistees remained far below established targets. For more on the Conscription Crisis in Ireland see, Alan J. Ward, "Lloyd George and the 1918 Irish conscription crisis," *Historical Journal*, 17 (1974), 107-29.

enlistment returns came through recruiting offices that served specific regiments and multiple counties. Looking at the returns for the recruiting areas that contained each of the above-mentioned cities provides a rough estimate of the number of men each contributed, especially when one considers that the vast majority of Irish recruits tended to come from urban areas.²² The following estimates only account for returns through mid-1917, and it bears mentioning that the threat of conscription in 1918 actually saw volunteer enlistments rise in Ireland: Belfast, 43,841; Omagh (included Derry), 8,200; Naas (included Dublin), 26,611; and Tralee (included Cork City), 14,577.²³

The Irish have a long and storied history as members of the British army. The men enlisting for the First World War were generally placed in one of the three divisions assigned to the Irish. The 36th (Ulster) Division drew heavily from the unionist paramilitary group the Ulster Volunteer Force and the 16th (Irish) Division drew from the Irish National Volunteers. These two divisions tended to be more politicized than the 10th (Irish) Division. All three Irish divisions were created specifically for the First World War and consisted heavily of battalions drawn from the traditional Irish regiments. The Irish regiments included: the Royal Irish Rifles; the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers; the Royal Irish Fusiliers; the Royal Dublin Fusiliers; the Royal Irish Regiment; the

²² Callen, 50.

²³ Callen, 44.

Other sources place Cork City's contribution at 6,000 for the course of the war and 12,000 for the county. Estimates for Dublin City sit as high as 23,438. Donal O Drisceoil, "Conflict and War, 1914-1923," in *Atlas of Cork City*, John Crowley, Robert Devoy, Denis Linehan, and Patrick O'Flanagan, eds. (Cork: Cork University Press, 2005), 285; Callen, 52.

Connaught Rangers; the Leinster Regiment; and the Royal Munster Fusiliers.²⁴ Each regiment was responsible for recruiting in an assigned number of Irish counties.²⁵ During the course of the war the 16th and 36th Divisions served on the Western Front while the 10th Division fought at Gallipoli and in the Middle East.

The number of Irish casualties, too, suffers from tabulation problems. The number most often cited for the Irish war dead, even appearing on the Irish National War Memorial, is 49,435. This number was determined after compiling *Ireland's memorial records 1914-18*, the national role of honor published by the Irish National War Memorial Trust in 1923. However, the methodology used at the time was flawed. Although all the Irish divisions consisted mainly of Irish men, they were not exclusively so, especially as the war wore on, casualties mounted, and the need to fill the ranks with an able body increased. Therefore, not every death in an Irish division or regiment was an Irishman. Patrick Casey combed through the names of *Soldiers died in the Great War 1914-19*, published by the British government, and found 29,779 names of Irish origin. Combined with an additional 437 names from other sources, Casey confirms at least 30,216 Irish deaths in the First World War, but hypothesizes that his list is conservative and that the number is likely around 35,000.²⁶

In summary, between 210,000 and 350,000 Irish men served in the First World War. Irish fatalities number between 30,000 and 35,000 on the low end. The number of

²⁴ For more information on the history of the Irish regiments, see David Murphy, *The Irish Brigades, 1685-2006* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2007).

²⁵ Callan, 43.

²⁶ Casey, 195, 197.

veterans who returned to Ireland after the war stood around 100,000, making it clear that thousands of Irish veterans chose not to return to Ireland after the war.²⁷ For example Michael O’Leary, the first Irish soldier to earn the Victoria Cross in the Great War emigrated to Canada before returning to England, not Ireland.²⁸ The absence of so many veterans either killed in action or opting not to return after the war undermined the memory of the war in Ireland and complicated the process of remembering their sacrifice.

Demobilized Irish veterans constituted a diverse and complex sub-community within Irish society. A number of military, paramilitary, and police organizations benefitted from demobilization. While not all of the Irish men joining these groups were war veterans, many were. Before the end of the war many Irish men joined the army with the intention of gaining job skills. This proved to be a lucrative decision in post-war recruiting in Ireland where the Army offered £5 6s 6d weekly pay with a £25 bonus at the end of every year to skilled tradesmen, compared to the basic army pay of £1 4s 6d. The British Army continued recruiting in Ireland through 1921 until the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922. Over that period 20,000 men enlisted in the reconstituted British

²⁷ David Fitzpatrick provides data for demobilized veterans, stating that between the Armistice and 12 May 1920, 87,034 men (4,335 officers) demobilized in the Ireland dispersal area. Taking into account cases where no destination was provided, he estimates that the total number of returning veterans stood in the area of 98,600 (5,700 officers), Fitzpatrick, “Militarism in Ireland,” 501, fn 62.

Working with the low end of the available data, if the Irish recruits totaled around 210,000 and suffered 30,000 casualties that leaves almost 80,000 men who either re-enlisted, were Irish National Volunteers invalided out of the military early, or chose not to return to Ireland after demobilization.

²⁸ O’Leary earned the Victoria Cross when on 1 February 1915 he stormed a German position and took two barricades by himself, killing eight Germans and taking two prisoner in the process. O’Leary returned to Ireland to participate in a recruiting campaign in November 1915. He retired from the British army on 10 June 1919 and set out from Liverpool for Toronto, Canada on 26 February 1921, where he eventually found a job with the Canadian government. After several years abroad, O’Leary returned to England where he got into manufacturing. Cork City and County Archives U392/Box 13, “Irish VC Heroes”; *Irish Independent*, 29 November 1926.

Army from Irish recruiting depots, comprising approximately nine percent of all army recruits and matching Ireland's pre-First World War recruiting percentage.²⁹ Most of the Irish regiments remained intact until June 1922, but suspicions from the high command prevented their deployment in Ireland. The Royal Irish Constabulary gained 300 new men, many war veterans, in the first two months of 1920 and in Northern Ireland the Ulster Volunteer Force re-organized into the Ulster Special Constabulary. Even the Royal Irish Constabulary Reserve Force, (also known as the "Black and Tans") added Irish men to their numbers, although the 700 Irish volunteers paled in comparison to the 10,000 non-Irish ex-servicemen who filled out the ranks. Finally, several hundred Catholic ex-servicemen joined up with republican paramilitary groups, flying columns, or the National Army. Some of the most recognizable names from the Anglo-Irish and Irish Civil wars were veterans of the First World War, including Tom Barry, Erskine Childers, Emmet Dalton, and Paddy Mulcahy.

Most ex-servicemen, however, found life difficult in the new Ireland. Threats and intimidation from the IRA beleaguered ex-servicemen, especially in Cork, where during the Irish Civil War the IRA targeted Protestants and former British army officers. While the IRA suspected many ex-servicemen of spying, most of their suspicions were unfounded and the majority of the men they attacked or killed were guilty only of following the wrong religion or serving the British government in the past. Unemployment, dire economic straits, and discrimination by the government and

²⁹ Keith Jeffery, "The post-war army," in *A Nation In Arms: A social study of the British army in the First World War*, ed. Ian F. W. Beckett and Keith Simpson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), 219-221.

employers placed a large minority of Irish ex-servicemen in a precarious position within Irish society.³⁰ The array of post-war activities and commitments by Irish veterans of the First World War demonstrates the social complexity of that sub-community and, in conjunction with the changing Irish political climate, helps to explain why the memory of the war became an area of contention.

The British Legion

One of the most important institutions involved in the culture of commemoration of the First World War was the British Legion. Established in 1921 by the unification of various ex-servicemen's organizations in Britain, the British Legion quickly became the strongest advocate for surviving veterans and their deceased comrades. At its outset, the Legion emphasized that it was a non-political, non-sectarian organization that functioned as a social club, with local branches and activities. The Legion also adopted the motto "Service not self," a principle evident in its work as a benevolent society that tried to find work for unemployed ex-servicemen, build houses for homeless ex-servicemen, and aided those in need of other forms of assistance. To fund these activities the Legion relied upon money collected during the annual Poppy Appeal, which began in 1921 and continued to serve as the Legion's main source of income for many years. Although membership in the Legion was low compared to the number of war veterans, it offered assistance to all veterans of the First World War regardless of whether they were dues-paying members; clearly the British Legion catered to a large constituency. The Legion

³⁰ Fitzpatrick, "Militarism in Ireland, 1900-1922," 399-400; Peter Hart, *The IRA and Its Enemies: Violence and Community in Cork 1916-1923* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 16-17; Jane Leonard, "Getting Them at Last: The IRA and Ex-Servicemen," in *Revolution?: Ireland 1917-1923*, ed. David Fitzpatrick (Dublin: Trinity History Workshop, 1990), 118-129.

also played a major role in commemorating the war dead and often took the lead in organizing local commemorative events. The eleventh of November, known as Armistice Day (Remembrance Day to the ex-service community), became a day for reflecting on the experience of the First World War and an opportunity for ex-servicemen and their families to come together in a sympathetic environment to engage their collective and individual memories of the war. Remembrance Day activities varied by location, but in general they included some combination of secular and religious commemorations, parades of ex-servicemen, and other events. The British Legion was an international, national, regional, and local institution all at once, a structure that helped it to overcome regional differences and survive into the twenty-first century.³¹

During the 1920s the British Legion consolidated power and social prestige with an impressive organizational infrastructure. In Ireland, however, where numerous ex-service groups vied for influence the situation was much different. Socio-economic standards were much lower in Ireland than in the United Kingdom. That, coupled with the fact that the Free State government declined to give ex-servicemen preference for civil service jobs and generally left them to their own devices, put Irish ex-servicemen at greater risk than their British counterparts. After struggling for a number of years the Legion of Irish Ex-Servicemen, the leading veterans body in Ireland, officially joined the fold of the British Legion in 1925.³² The British Legion in Ireland was split into two

³¹ Brian Harding, *Keeping Faith: The history of the Royal British Legion* (Barnsley, South Yorkshire: Leo Cooper, 2001); Niall Barr, *The Lion and the Poppy: British Veterans, Politics, and Society, 1921-1939* (London and Westport, CT: Praeger, 2005).

³² *British Legion*, 4, no. 8 (Feb 1925), 24.

separate areas, each with their own executive board, with the Northern Area responsible for the six counties of Northern Ireland and the Southern Area managed the twenty-six counties of the Irish Free State. Despite the political and religious differences inherent in Irish society, the Irish Legion upheld the organization's non-political and non-sectarian goals and maintained these principles. Remembrance Day marked an annual occasion when Catholics and Protestants peaceably interacted, and some ceremonies saw co-mingling between Northern Irish and Free State veterans. Because of its structure and influence the Legion may seem like a source of official memory, but it had a mission and agenda that often diverged from both governments, north and south. Given its status as a private, charitable organization the British Legion was free of government intervention and acted as the cornerstone of vernacular memory of the Great War in Ireland. Irish membership in the British Legion between 1925-1935 reached a high point in 1926 when 2.41 and 2.21 percent of the ex-servicemen in Ireland were members in the north and south, respectively.³³ Official membership remained paltry in Ireland because of the poor economic situation there and the fact that an ex-serviceman did not need to be a member to receive Legion aid. Taken together, these factors strained the Legion's financial resources in Ireland. Despite these obstacles, the British Legion was the most visible and active organization to deal with the memory of the First World War in Ireland and thus it figures heavily into this study.

Chapter Organization

This dissertation is divided into six chapters. The first four chapters cover different aspects of Great War memory and commemoration in the period from 1919 to

³³ Barr, 62.

1939, which stands as the high water mark for the subject. The fifth chapter chronicles the evolution of the First World War's legacy from 1939 to 1987, a period that saw a precipitous decline in interest for the War and its veterans in the Free State, and increasing difficulties in the North as well. The sixth chapter begins in 1987 and examines the renaissance of interest in Ireland's role in the Great War and the various ways that memory manifested in Irish culture.

Chapter one examines the form and structure of public commemorations in Ireland during the inter-war period. Focusing on Remembrance Day ceremonies and the Poppy Appeal in Dublin, Cork, Derry, and Belfast shows that there was broad support for these activities on the local level. Of course, given the changing political climate in Ireland, this chapter also touches on various forms of opposition to these commemorative activities, but argues that outside of Dublin agitators were few in number and incidents occurred randomly. In Dublin, greater opposition to memorialization existed due to the well-organized activities of the League Against Imperialism, but even though they managed to draw large numbers to their rallies, which were scheduled near Remembrance Day, their efforts had virtually no effect on commemorative activities of ex-servicemen and their families. The popularity of these events in Ireland demonstrate one of the major cultural consequences of Great War memory, which was the introduction of rituals (the two minutes silence) and symbols (the poppy) that created solidarity among the ex-service community and their supporters that transcended political and sectarian borders. Furthermore, this success forced those in the Free State who did not want to remember Ireland's role in the Great War to do so, which had the effect of

retarding the development of a single, nationalist, historical narrative for the new Irish Free State.

Chapter two looks at the various cultural forms that Great War memory took in Ireland. Here a significant amount of attention is given to the development of memorials dedicated to the war dead. All four of the major cities being studied here erected war memorials. The form, location, and usage of these and other tributes to the war dead impacted the physical landscape of Ireland and shaped the memory of the First World War in Ireland. The third chapter looks beyond physical monuments, and surveys some of the ways the war's legacy manifested itself in popular culture. Battlefield pilgrimages, dances, concerts, films, songs, carnivals and fairs, and the creation of Old Comrades Associations constitute some of the ways in which ex-servicemen in Ireland were able to blend aspects of military and civilian culture in an effort to maintain the comradeship developed during the war as well as cultivate support from outside of the ex-service community.

Chapter four examines the transition from the memory of the dead to the memory of the living. When Irish veterans returned home many were faced with unemployment and unsatisfactory living conditions. Whereas the cultural phenomena in Chapter One tended to occur once a year, and those in Chapters Two and Three varied in their frequency the need for work and for housing were constants among Irish ex-servicemen for many years. In terms of housing, Irish ex-servicemen appeared to have had an advantage over their British counterparts because of the creation of the Irish Sailors and Soldiers Land Trust (ISSLT), which was charged with building homes for Irish veterans.

Unfortunately, many of the ISSLT's promises went unfulfilled and the entire endeavor caused much consternation and bitterness for veterans. Unemployment persisted as a bitter pill many Irish veterans were forced to swallow as well. The King's National Roll, a British program where employers pledged jobs for disabled veterans, was never applied in the Free State and only after 1922 in Northern Ireland, where employers were reluctant to participate.³⁴ The British Legion was the primary advocate for all Irish ex-servicemen on these and other issues. This chapter focuses on the British Legion's efforts to assist Irish ex-servicemen with the matters of housing and employment. In essence, this chapter constitutes an examination of the living memory of the war through the lives of those who survived.

The Second World War stands as a major watershed in world history and its conclusion brought with it a change in the way that many people throughout Europe commemorated the "war to end all wars" that preceded it. The memory of the First World War suffered as a result. This phenomenon occurred in Britain as well as in Ireland, but conditions in Ireland meant that the fading of Great War memory in Ireland happened at an expedited rate. Chapter five follows the subjects of the first four chapters into this new era and discusses how each fared up until the Enniskilling Bombing in 1987. One of the major developments during the period immediately following the Second War was the development of "national amnesia" towards the Great War in the Free State. Because of the limited resources of the ex-service community, the counter-narrative of Irish identity associated with it encountered problems sustaining itself through the twentieth century. Therefore, the official position toward the Great War, which considered it part of British,

³⁴ Leonard, "Survivors," 216.

not Irish, history gained prominence. Several generations of Irish people were raised without knowledge of Ireland's participation in the First World War, leaving only the aging survivors and their associates as the guardians of Ireland's Great War memory. This chapter also examines the effect of the Troubles, which began in the late 1960s, on the memory of the First World War and how contemporary events precipitated a shift in the culture of Great War memory away from the ex-service community as its primary custodians to broader awareness and interest in the subject generated through Irish popular culture.

The final chapter examines the culture of commemoration of the Great War in Ireland since the Enniskilling Bombing, an event that acts as a turning point for Great War memory. It is in this most recent period that interest in the war returned from the edges of Irish history. As Ireland became an important player in the European Union in the closing years of the twentieth century, the First World War functioned as a shared experience between the Irish, north and south, and the rest of Europe. Propelled at first by local initiatives, the subject of Ireland and the First World War re-emerged as a common theme in various popular media and in scholarship from professional and amateur historians. Furthermore, Ireland's Great War experience became an element of the northern peace process as all sides began to recognize their shared historical experience in the war. The Irish Republic's government took major strides toward reversing the damage done for so many years to the memory of the war, including support for the refurbishment of the Irish National War Memorial in Dublin, participating in commemorative events, and advocating on behalf of the Irish branch of the Shot At

Dawn Campaign, a group seeking pardons for Irish men executed by the British army during the First World War, to the British Parliament.

After being all but ignored by generations of Irish historians, the First World War has become a popular topic since the closing decades of the twentieth century. On the one hand an increasing number of regimental and division histories, typically produced by amateur historians, prove useful in illustrating how the Irish fared on the battlefield, yet these tracts, often focusing on the war years, 1914-1918, fail to take into account the long-term impact of the First World War on Ireland. Among professional historians, important work has been done on the politics involved with Ireland's participation in the war, the motives propelling Irish men to enlist in the British army, and the social effects of the war on Ireland.³⁵ Much of the scholarly literature on the First World War has centered on acknowledging and recovering southern Ireland's role in the war. Keith Jeffery, one of the first historians to examine seriously the memory of the war in Irish culture, has suggested that the war was a unifying experience in Ireland.³⁶ While Jeffery's

³⁵ See, David Fitzpatrick, ed. *Ireland and the First World War* (Dublin: Trinity History Workshop, 1986); idem, "The Logic of collective sacrifice: Ireland and the British army, 1914-1918," *Historical Journal* 38 (1995): 1017-1030; idem, "Militarism in Ireland, 1900-1922," in *A Military History of Ireland*, ed. Thomas Bartlett and Keith Jeffery (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); idem, "Commemoration in the Irish Free State: a chronicle of embarrassment," in *History and memory in modern Ireland*, ed. Ian McBride (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 184-203; Nuala C. Johnson, "The spectacle of memory: Ireland's remembrance of the Great War, 1919," *Journal of Historical Geography*, 25:1 (1999), 36-56; idem, *Ireland, the Great War and the Geography of Remembrance* (Cambridge University Press, 2003); John Horne, ed., *Our War: Ireland and the Great War* (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2008).

³⁶ Keith Jeffery, *Ireland and the Great War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). See also, Keith Jeffery, "The Great War in modern Irish memory," in *Men, Women and War (Historical Studies XVIII)*, ed. T. G. Fraser and Keith Jeffery (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1993), 136-157; idem, "Irish culture and the Great War," *Bullán* 1/2 (Autumn 1994), 87-96; idem, "Irish prose writers of the First World War," in *Modern Irish Writers and the Wars*, ed. Kathleen Devine (Gerrards Cross, 1999), 1-17; idem, "Gallipoli and Ireland," in *Gallipoli: making history*, ed. Jenny Macleod, Military History and Policy, 16 (London: Cass, 2004), 98-109; idem, *Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson: a political soldier* (Oxford: Oxford University

cultural studies tend to focus on the arena of high culture, Jane Leonard's work examines the quotidian experiences of Irish ex-servicemen in post-war Ireland.³⁷ Taken together, these historians have begun to show the complex and unique nature of Great War memory in Ireland. However, limiting the exploration of the First World War and war memory to southern Ireland takes for granted Northern support for the war and suggests that the Northern experience was more closely aligned with commemorative practices in Britain. Catherine Switzer's study of northern Unionist war commemoration fleshes out the unique aspects of Great War memory in Northern Ireland.³⁸ This project builds on these approaches, but at the same time expands its scope to include both northern and southern Ireland, revealing the dynamic nature of war memory in both regions and prompts comparisons between the two polities. Whereas other studies tend to create a static construct of Great War memory by focusing on a specific window of time, the present study considers the changes that occurred to this memory over the course of the twentieth century. The difference, therefore, is akin to that between a photograph and a film. Here the memory of the Great War is not cast as a hegemonic, static entity, but

Press, 2006); idem, "Echoes of War," in *Our War: Ireland and the Great War*, ed. John Horne (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2008), 263-275.

³⁷ Jane Leonard, "Lest we forget," in *Ireland and the First World War*, ed. David Fitzpatrick (Dublin: Trinity History Workshop, 1986), 59-67; idem, "The twinge of memory: Armistice Day and Remembrance Sunday in Dublin since 1919," in *Unionism in Modern Ireland: New Perspectives on Politics and Culture*, ed. Richard English and Graham Walker (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1996), 99-114; idem, "Facing 'the finger of scorn': veterans' memories of Ireland after the Great War," in *War and Memory in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Martin Evans and Ken Lunn (Oxford and New York, 1997), 59-72; idem, "The Reaction of Irish Officers in the British Army to the Easter Rising of 1916," in *Facing Armageddon: The First World War Experienced*, ed. Hugh P. Cecil and Peter H. Liddle (London: Leo Cooper, 1996), 256-268; idem, "Survivors" in *Our War: Ireland and the Great War*, ed. John Horne (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2008), 209-223.

³⁸ Catherine Switzer, *Unionists and Great War commemoration in the North of Ireland 1914-1918* (Dublin and Portland, OR: Irish Academic Press, 2007).

one that has multiple components and perspectives that continually intersect and change over time.

The memory of the First World War has generated scholarly examination in most of the nations that participated in the war. These range from works that view the First World War as a watershed moment in European history that forever changed the culture of the continent to studies that view the war as a brief aberration in European culture and society, and generally see continuity in the culture of the pre- and post-war periods until the Second World War. The memory of the war in twentieth century Ireland supports the latter position.³⁹

At least one additional caveat is necessary at the outset of this project. Despite the high proportion of men who enlisted in to the British army during the war to the number of adult men in Ireland at the time, proactive commemoration of the First World War was a minority movement in the Free State. Yet, it was a large minority. After the War and throughout the 1920s and 1930s, veterans and their families remembered the War as a shared experience of sacrifice, suffering, and loss and they turned to organizations such as the British Legion to commemorate this vision of Irish participation in the First World War. Despite the salience of this attitude toward the Great War in the realm of vernacular memory, it was constantly at odds with the official memory of the two Irish governments. For a number of reasons, the shared aspect of vernacular memory was unable to be maintained and waned for several decades as the official memory of the war became

³⁹ See, Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford, 1975) for position one; Jay Winter, *Sites Of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European cultural history* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) for position two.

dominant. Beginning with the Troubles, the Great War as a shared event in Irish history voiced through vernacular memory started to penetrate the larger society in the 1970s and push back against the dominant official memory. It was not until after the Enniskillen Bombing in 1987 that the vision of the war as a shared memory gained considerable ground. Unfortunately, by this time most of the Irish ex-servicemen had died out and control of the memory of the war no longer remained in the possession of those who lived through it. While the history of the memory of the Great War in Ireland resembles a rollercoaster, its persistence and eventual renaissance demonstrate that even though it existed on the fringes of Irish history for decades, it remains an important component of Irish history and one that warrants rigorous scrutiny.



The goal of this dissertation is two-fold. First, it strives to uncover the broad range of cultural forms that the memory of the First World War inhabits in Ireland and to map the changes these forms encounter throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first centuries. Second, it seeks to challenge the politics of separation evident in Irish public life by tracing a strand of shared historical experience since 1914. Although the memory of the Great War was kept alive by a minority of people in the Free State for decades, the fact that politicians and the general public have shown a renewed interest in Ireland's role in the war in recent years shows that the efforts of those torch-bearers was not in vain.

CHAPTER ONE

NOT A DAY OF REJOICING: THE EVOLUTION OF REMEMBRANCE DAY AND THE POPPY APPEAL IN IRELAND, 1919-1939

Introduction

With the cessation of hostilities on 11 November 1918, the First World War passed from current event to recent history. One component of this transition revolved around how to commemorate the war dead. Given the magnitude of the war and its unprecedented destruction and loss of life there was a real need for people in the combatant countries to make sense of what happened. The staggering number of war dead left many families in search of answers and with the need to share and express their grief with others in the same situation. In Britain and Ireland, one of the solutions to this problem came in the form of ceremonies held annually on 11 November with the specific purpose of remembering the sacrifices made by the war dead. In the first few years following the war, these ceremonies lacked consistency and uniformity in terms of structure—that is until the appearance of the British Legion, which made great strides in formalizing the commemorative ritual. While Legion influence helped to codify Remembrance Day commemorations, local variations managed to persist throughout Ireland. Every year thousands of ex-servicemen and their families attended these ceremonies in Ireland. Although one must be cautious when evaluating attendance

numbers presented in the local press, it is clear that during the inter-war period, Remembrance Day celebrations drew sizeable crowds in both the north and the south.

Attendance at Remembrance Day ceremonies certainly functioned as one of the ritualistic ways in which Irish citizens engaged the memory of the Great War. The introduction of the Poppy Appeal in 1921 brought with it a cultural symbol of commemoration that became a component of Remembrance rituals. The act of going out, purchasing a poppy, and pinning it to one's clothing emerged as one commemorative ritual that gained widespread support in both Irish polities. Furthermore, poppies were used to adorn wreaths, which were in turn utilized in civic and private Remembrance Day ceremonies. In fact, poppy sales in Dublin exceeded those in Belfast in 1922.¹ Only when Fianna Fáil came to power in 1932 and began to tighten their grasp on the Free State's historical past by making it increasingly difficult for coordinating parties to carry-out their established commemorative plans did the public popularity of remembrance rituals begin to decline.

This chapter examines the role of rituals in contributing to collective memory. Earlier studies demonstrate that communities create rituals to convey and to maintain memory. Differences arise between individual memory and collective memory because the former is based on personal experience while the latter is predicated on a set of shared experiences. Commemorative ceremonies typically utilize rituals because they transform

¹ Kevin Myers, "The Irish and the Great War: A Case of Amnesia," in *Ideas Matter: essays in honour of Conor Cruise O'Brien*, Richard English and Joseph Skelly Morrison, ed., (Dublin: Poolbeg, 1998), 106.

the ceremony into a participatory event, something that is shared by all in attendance.²

In the case of Remembrance Day ceremonies, rituals include the laying of poppy wreaths, the two minutes silence, the march past, and the singing of “God Save The King.” These types of rituals, those that require active participation, hold the key for conveying and maintaining collective memory because they communicate a mutually understood set of principles and meaning. Following the catastrophe of the First World War the search for meaning was great as people everywhere tried to make sense of the war. With so much loss throughout the continent the public ritualization of bereavement and the emphasis for the living to remember the dead, often by helping others, held additional keys to the development of collective memory through a shared sense of grief and obligation.³ The construction of social memory is cumulative and the creation of commemorative ritual helped transmit shared experience and develop social continuity over time. Instead of focusing on the present and social change, ritual connects societies to their past while staying relevant to the present.⁴

After the cessation of hostilities on the continent, demobilized Irish veterans returned home only to find their country engaged in another war. From 1919-1921, Ireland fought Britain for their independence in the Anglo-Irish war. The Irish agreed to a truce with the British in June of 1921 and by December had negotiated independence for the majority of the island. Under the agreement, the newly created Irish Free State would

² Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 72-73.

³ Jay Winter, *Sites Of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European cultural history* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 97.

⁴ *Ibid*, 39-40.

remain part of the British Commonwealth. Almost immediately, fissures emerged within the Irish republican movement. The pro-treaty faction, led by Michael Collins, viewed the treaty as an imperfect solution, but also saw it as the first step in a longer process ending ultimately in complete independence. On the other side, the anti-treaty faction rejected the treaty out of hand and continued to advocate for a thirty-two county, independent Irish republic. The Irish Free State came into existence in 1922 and almost immediately the fissures between the pro-treaty and anti-treaty factions erupted into civil war, which claimed the life of Michael Collins before ending in 1923. On-going conflicts, especially ones spurred by political ideology, exacerbated the already complex position of Great War veterans in Irish society and made the task of commemorating them and the war dead a thorny issue.

Remembrance Day: Dublin

Dublin stands as an obvious starting point for examining Great War commemoration in Ireland, not only because thousands of men from Dublin volunteered for the British army during the war, but also because some of the largest events in Ireland commemorating the First World War took place there. Being the political and commercial center of Ireland, Dublin's population included Protestants and Catholics, republicans, loyalists, and everyone in between, and a wide range of socio-economic classes. When taken together, these factors made Dublin a hotbed of commemorative activity for the First World War. At the same time, these exercises in remembrance, conducted in the heart of a changing Irish society, meant that Dublin became a breeding ground for opposition to these events.

The main commemorative event for the Great War in Dublin took place annually on 11 November, also commonly called Remembrance (or Armistice) Day.⁵ In 1919, however, an additional public spectacle occurred in July, dubbed the Victory March. This event ran concurrently with similar festivities in Britain with the purpose of formally celebrating the peace. An estimated twenty thousand people took part in the Dublin Victory March and of those approximately five thousand were demobilized men, most of whom marched with their former regiments. Members of the Irish Guards, Royal Irish Regiment, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, Royal Irish Rifles, Connaught Rangers, Leinster Regiment, and Munster Fusiliers attended the events in the capital. Public appreciation for the soldiers and the conclusion of hostilities was widespread, especially for the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, which saw 1,280 demobilized members participate. At the head of the ceremony was Lord John French, who took the salute outside the Bank of Ireland in College Green and opted to attend the Victory March in Dublin over its counterpart in London. One London paper remarked that the absence of Lord French, who represented the Old Contemptibles, would leave the London ceremony “sadly incomplete.” French’s presence in Ireland was a coup of sorts for Ireland’s ex-service community and they were glad to have him in attendance.⁶ The scene in Dublin was quite impressive and contemporary accounts stated that it took an hour and a half for the men, bands, and vehicles in the parade to pass a given point. Business in Dublin ceased for the

⁵ Throughout this work, I have opted to use the term Remembrance Day over Armistice Day because it better reflects the position and the sentiments that the ex-service community in Ireland held about the meaning of the occasion. The British Legion and war veterans preferred to use the term “Remembrance Day.”

⁶ French was a native Englishman and was raised in London.

day and the response from the general public was positive. Thousands crowded the city's main thoroughfares in order to witness the festivities. Union Jacks and other decorations were prominent throughout the city on buildings and individuals.⁷

The festivities for the first Armistice Day in 1919 did approach the scale of the Victory March, but this comes as little surprise since no established commemorative ritual existed. In the years that followed, finding a permanent location in Dublin to hold the Remembrance Day ceremony proved difficult for a number of years. Coupled with the external social and political climate in the Free State, the lack of a ceremony site meant that organizers tried several locations before finding a suitable one. Moreover, the absence of a strong national veterans organization as a structuring force also retarded the development of a codified commemorative ritual. Taking a cue from the Victory March, the first Remembrance Day ceremonies were held in College Green because its location in the center of the city made it an ideal meeting point for the citizen's of Dublin. Ex-servicemen could parade through the heart of Dublin and spectators would not have far to go in order to witness the spectacle. In succeeding years support for this commemorative exercise in the Free State's capitol dramatically increased, as did the number of participants and attendees.

The convenience College Green afforded proved to be too great. While its central location was ideal for those who came to commemorate their dead and commiserate with others of their ilk, College Green was easily accessible to protesters and other disruptive forces. City authorities forced the Legion's Remembrance Day ceremony out of College Green after 1924, because it had grown so large and became a target for the opposition

⁷ *Weekly Irish Times*, 19 July, 26 July, 1919.

from republicans.⁸ In 1925, the ceremony took place in nearby Stephen's Green and the *Irish Times* reported attendance of 120,000. The change in venue was accompanied by the first major disruption to that point. During the two minutes silence protesters let off smoke bombs in two locations, one in Earlsfort Terrace and the other just outside the southeast corner of Stephen's Green where the park meets Earlsfort Terrace. The bombs went off precisely at the same time that the two minutes silence commenced. In the park, the bombs were deployed near the outer fringes of the crowd where mostly women and children gathered. Fortunately, the surrounding buildings blocked the wind and diminished the effect of the bomb in the park. Those set off in Earlsfort Terrace generated considerably more smoke, causing more disturbance than those in Stephen's Green. Major J. J. Tynan of the British Legion, who was one of the men presiding over the ceremony, managed to defuse the situation by ordering the ex-servicemen in attendance to "stand fast." A number of ex-servicemen in the affected areas took up the call to restore order. Upon doing so, the ceremony finished in solemn silence.⁹

The reason for such a disruptive protest is most likely related to on-going political developments. On 7 November 1925, mere days before Remembrance Day, the Boundary Commission, the body in charge of determining the land borders of the Free State and

⁸ The *Belfast Newsletter's* critical coverage of Dublin's Remembrance Day activities in 1925 included a report that ex-servicemen employed in Government Departments were refused permission to attend the Remembrance Day ceremony that year. While the Free State government did not actively support Remembrance Day the report appears heavily biased and likely omits some of the nuances associated with such a policy. What is more likely is that the Free State government prohibited ex-servicemen in government positions from participating as elected officials. They would not be allowed to wear any of the badges of their office or position, but they would have been able to attend the ceremony. Several Free State senators were high ranking officials in the British Legion and participated in these activities without consequence, but they did so as members of the British Legion and not as members of the Dáil; *Belfast Newsletter*, 11 November 1925.

⁹ *Irish Times*, 12 November 1925; *Dublin Evening Mail*, 11 November 1925.

Northern Ireland, released their report, which recommended minimal changes to the northern border most of which favored Northern Ireland. The smoke bombs at the Dublin Remembrance Day ceremony were likely a Republican reaction to the Boundary Commission report, which not only abolished the ideal of a single, united Ireland, but also gave Free State land to the North. The Boundary Commission was the final negotiation during the independence period and these findings greatly antagonized Irish republicans, who then sought retribution by disrupting what they considered a British event. The Boundary Commission report created a political crisis that was only resolved after leaders from the Free State, Northern Ireland, and Britain met and agreed to leave the original border between the Free State and Northern Ireland unchanged.¹⁰

Beginning with the eighth anniversary of the Armistice in 1926, the ceremony moved again, this time from Stephen's Green to Phoenix Park.¹¹ The move from the city center to Phoenix Park occurred for two reasons. First, the size of the Remembrance Day ceremonies grew to a size that was too large for Stephen's Green to comfortably accommodate. Prior to the 1925 ceremony it was estimated that 70,000 would fit in Stephen's Green and the surrounding area, but as noted, the crowd was estimated at 120,000.¹² While these numbers are difficult to verify, there is no doubt that large crowds attended these ceremonies, and that they catered to more-than-capacity crowds. Second, by moving the primary ceremony from the city's center to its periphery in Phoenix Park,

¹⁰ J. L. McCracken, "Northern Ireland: 1921-66," in *The Course of Irish History*, 4th ed., T.W. Moody and F. X. Martin, ed., (Lanham, MD: Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 2001), 264.

¹¹ National Archive of Ireland, Department of the Taoiseach (Hereafter NAI/DT), S3370B, "Memo: Armistice Day in Dublin," 29 September 1932; *Irish Times*, 11 November 1926.

¹² *Dublin Evening Mail*, 10 November 1925; *Irish Times* 12 November 1925.

the number of protesters and disruptive individuals at the actual ceremony decreased. Rather than being able to amble by the proceedings and interject some sort of disturbing action, individuals and groups would have to make a concerted effort to carry out a plan of interference, like the smoke bombs at the previous year's ceremony at Stephen's Green. To do the same at Phoenix Park would require a level of planning greater than mere impulse, where, on the outskirts of town, the lack of buildings and escape routes would make it more difficult to carry out a plan without being caught or meeting reprisal from angered veterans.

Various observances continued to take place in both College Green and Stephen's Green, however, but they were much smaller in comparison to those at Phoenix Park. For instance, police officers on duty in College Green stopped traffic to observe the silence. However, not all such events occurred contemporaneously with the Phoenix Park ceremony. St. Andrews College in Stephen's Green held a memorial service in the McEntire Hall the morning of 10 November 1928 that was attended by about 200 past and present students, many of whom fought in the war.¹³

The cornerstone of the Remembrance Day ceremony was the two minutes silence. Beginning precisely at eleven o'clock in the morning, those gathered to commemorate the war dead bowed their heads, the men in attendance removed their hats, and everyone spent two minutes in quiet reflection. On the first anniversary of the Armistice thousands of Dublin residents observed the two minutes silence. Of these, hundreds gathered in College Green. When the College clock struck eleven, the College flag was lowered to half-mast followed by the three flags flying on top of the Bank of Ireland across the

¹³ *Belfast Newsletter*, 12 November 1938; *Evening Herald*, 10 November 1928.

street. All tram and vehicular traffic came to a standstill and heads were bared during the observed silence. After two minutes, the flag was raised, traffic resumed, power was restored to the trams, and the crowd enthusiastically sang “God Save The King.”¹⁴ In 1919, the press reported almost universal compliance with the two minutes silence in Dublin. However, this would not be the case in the future. In 1921, large numbers continued to observe the silence, but there was no general stoppage in Dublin City. In 1938, a Dublin police officer stationed in College Green stopped traffic at eleven o’clock to observe the silence. One motorist honked his horn and a young man began to sing “A Soldier’s Song,” the Republican national anthem, but both were quickly quieted and the rest of the silence passed undisturbed.¹⁵ It was not until 1924 that reports of the ceremonies mention the incorporation of the bugle calls “Last Post” and “Reveille.”¹⁶ The lack of these bugle calls illustrates the civilian nature of the Remembrance Day ceremonies in its early years. Once the British Legion came into the picture, Remembrance Day rituals took on more institutionalized characteristics. This is undoubtedly due to the influence of the military in the Legion as well as the imposition of structure for these events. The additional guidance and support from the Legion established a revised set of rituals that enabled ex-servicemen and their families to get the most out of their commemorative experiences. Participants and observers knew what to expect and when to expect it.

¹⁴ *Dublin Evening Mail*, 11 November 1919.

¹⁵ *Belfast Newsletter*, 12 November 1938.

¹⁶ *Dublin Evening Mail*, 11 November 1921, 10 November 1924.

After moving to Phoenix Park the form of Dublin Remembrance Day ceremonies remained pretty consistent on a yearly basis. The day began with a parade of ex-servicemen from the city center, along the quays of the River Liffey to the Phoenix Park at the west end of the city. The parade to the ceremony served a number of functions. Because tensions existed between the ex-service community and other sections of the Irish citizenry in the Free State, displays of ex-service solidarity helped to reinforce and strengthen the bonds within the ex-service community. At the same time, parades in the Free State provided an opportunity to display bonds amongst the ex-servicemen regardless of politics or creed, and the sheer numbers involved with these processions created a safe zone for sympathetic citizens who had a stake in the festivities through the loss of a loved one in the war, but might otherwise avoid Remembrance Day activities for fear of reprisals. Once in the park, the processionists would gather around the cenotaph, which, for many years, consisted of a simple wooden cross. This was not a permanent monument in the park, but rather it was put up each year specifically for the ceremony. After the battle of Ginchy-Guillemont in 1916, the commanding officer of the 16th (Irish) Division erected a wooden cross on the battlefield to commemorate the men who died there. When the wooden battlefield cross was replaced by a granite one in 1926, the original was brought back to Ireland and became the centerpiece of the annual Remembrance Day ceremony in Dublin.¹⁷

The remembrance ritual relied heavily on precise timing. At 10:59am, buglers would sound the “Last Post,” and when this concluded at 11am the crowd observed the

¹⁷ National Army Museum, London (Hereafter NAM), 1959-04-116, Letter from Hickie to Stokes, 5 November 1932.

two minutes silence. At 11:02am the buglers would play “Reveille” signaling the end of the silence. Following the introspective portion of the ceremony came the laying of wreaths on the cenotaph. Wreaths were laid on behalf of various organizations, including the British Legion and other veterans and Old Comrades associations, as well as private businesses and individuals. Those choosing to take part in the wreath-laying portion of the ceremony had to notify the ceremony’s organizers and certain regulations had to be complied with in order to take part in the ceremony. Once all of the wreaths had been laid on the cenotaph the ex-servicemen in attendance marched past the cenotaph and gave an honorary salute, usually to a dignitary or high-ranking officer. At the conclusion of the ceremony the procession marched back to the city center and dispersed. In later years, however, the march back into the city was abandoned to prevent undesirable incidents from occurring.

One of the more unusual aspects of the Dublin ceremony was the manner in which the Legion handled the Free State government’s refusal to participate officially. Every year the Legion asked the Free State government to lay a wreath on the cross during the ceremony and every year the government declined. Because the government refused to participate in an official capacity, it became customary for a wreath to be laid on the cross in the name of the Free State government by the Legion, something that the Legion did of its own volition. Since this became an annual custom, the government clearly did not mind the Legion appropriating its name so long as no one from the government actually participated. When a new government was elected in 1932, the British Legion again appealed to the President of the Free State to take part in the wreath-

laying ceremony, but the request was declined that year and in succeeding years as well.¹⁸ While the decision appeared impolitic and insensitive, de Valera's stance echoed that of previous administrations.

Despite the increased restrictions placed on Remembrance Day ceremonies in Dublin and the increased hostility toward the jingoism associated with the occasion, attendance and support remained strong throughout the 1930s. As late as 1938 reports include significant attendance at the Phoenix Park ceremony and thousands of crosses placed in the Garden of Remembrance, which was a designated plot of land near the ceremony site where individuals who wished to place a cross in memory of a loved one could do so, hundreds of individuals observing the two minutes silence in the city center, police officers ensuring that traffic stopped during the silence, attempted disruptions during the silence were few and quickly subdued, and poppy sales were brisk, despite reports in the press that fewer people actually donned the scarlet flower.¹⁹

Cork

Remembrance Day ritual observation and opposition both garnered a significant amount of attention in the Free State capital, but in Cork, the nation's second-largest city, the situation proved to be markedly different. The city of Cork underwent a number of economic and social changes during the nineteenth century that situated the city and its hinterlands at a crossroads by the period of war and revolution, from 1912-1923. Cork City was a commercial and cultural center and much of the city's economic activity

¹⁸ NAI/DT/S3370B, Memo: Armistice Day in Dublin, 29 September 1932; Minute Sheet: Armistice Day Commemoration 1932; *Evening Herald*, 10 November 1928.

¹⁹ *Belfast Newsletter*, 12 November 1938.

revolved around the harbor, which proved to be its economic heart. Never a strong industrial city, textiles, shipbuilding, and distilling industries appeared and disappeared during the nineteenth century, but aside from a brief boom during the Great War, the textile and shipbuilding industries declined in the twentieth century.

Cork city's Catholics comprised about eighty-four percent of the population by the mid-1800s. Catholic emancipation in the 1820s helped to ensure the development of a Catholic middle class over the course of the century as well. Their emergence was marked by a move to the city's suburbs and away from the poorer, working classes remaining in the city. Catholics occupied most of the city's unskilled laborer jobs, and many of the skilled trades had a "sizeable proportion of Protestants in their ranks." Over the course of the nineteenth century, Cork city's population declined and housed a population of about 76,000 people by the start of the twentieth century.²⁰

Like the rest of Ireland in 1914, Cork was predominantly pro-Home Rule and supported Redmond and the Irish Parliamentary Party. Based on population trends throughout the nineteenth century, Cork city's population likely continued to decline, yet when the call to arms came in August 1914, the city contributed 6,000 volunteers over the course of the war, accounting for half of the entire county's volunteers. One-sixth of the 12,000 men from the county in the British army during the Great War died and "one in seven families in the city had a member fighting in the war."²¹ Following the war, the

²⁰ Maura Cronin, "Place, Class and Politics," in *Atlas of Cork City*, John Crowley, Robert Devoy, Denis Linehan, and Patrick O'Flanagan, eds. (Cork: Cork University Press, 2005), 202; Colin Rynne, "Industry 1750-1930," in *Atlas of Cork City*, John Crowley, Robert Devoy, Denis Linehan, and Patrick O'Flanagan, eds. (Cork: Cork University Press, 2005), 183-188.

²¹ Donal O Drisceoil, "Conflict and War, 1914-1923," in *Atlas of Cork City*, John Crowley, Robert Devoy, Denis Linehan, and Patrick O'Flanagan, eds. (Cork: Cork University Press, 2005), 258.

drastic shift in Cork politics in favor of the Republican movement earned it the nickname the “rebel county.” Despite this designation, Cork city’s Remembrance Day events proved to be well supported by the local community and it encountered very little resistance from the region’s republican elements.

Provincial Remembrance Day ceremonies in the Free State did not command the same attention as their Dublin counterparts. Nevertheless, they played an integral part in preserving the memory of the war dead in Ireland. As the Free State’s second largest city, Remembrance Day celebrations in Cork were well attended during the 1919-32 period. Some of the procedural components of the celebration mirrored those in Dublin, but Cork’s smaller size allowed for a number of local variances that demonstrate the mass appeal of Remembrance Day in the Rebel County.

In 1919, the Cork Remembrance Day events were still embryonic and had yet to be codified into ritual. An ad-hoc atmosphere surrounded the first year’s activities and people recognized the anniversary of the Armistice by observing the two minutes silence and lowering flags to half-mast (Union Jacks), which was done at precisely eleven o’clock. Afterwards, a procession of demobilized soldiers marched through the main streets of the city center while the accompanying band played Chopin’s “Dead March” and other funeral dirges. Crowds thronged the streets as the procession passed by and many bared and bowed their heads in reverence. Once the procession reached the Grand Parade, the band sounded the “Last Post,” signaling the conclusion of the day’s event, and the ex-soldiers and crowds dispersed.²²

²² *The Cork Weekly News*, 15 November 1919.

By 1924, Remembrance Day events in Cork had become more standardized.

On Sunday 9 November, a large contingent of about 2,000 people, including ex-servicemen and relatives, wives and children, of the deceased, under the auspices of the Legion of Irish Ex-Servicemen, which contained a mix of Protestants and Catholics, marched from the South Mall to St. Finbarre's Cathedral, where a wreath was laid on the Church's war memorial. At this point, the Protestant ex-servicemen attended Remembrance services at St. Finbarre's. Meanwhile, the Catholic ex-servicemen, denoted in the press as "the main body," proceeded to St. Mary's Catholic Cathedral for memorial Mass. Following the Catholic service, the main body and the band returned to the St. Finbarre's where the Protestants rejoined the assembly. From there, they paraded as a unified body to Gillabbey Rock where a wreath was laid on the war memorial to the Corkmen who died and served in the Boer War. A brief address and the sounding of "Last Post" marked the conclusion of this portion of the commemoration. The procession returned to the South Mall where the dismissal took place. In addition to this primary commemorative display, another organization, the Cork Independent Ex-Servicemen's Club, comprised almost exclusively of Catholic, nationalist ex-servicemen, had their own Remembrance Day activities.²³ These generally mirrored those undertaken by the main group with the exception of an earlier start time at nine in the morning and attending a 9:15am Catholic service at St. Mary's Cathedral. There is no account stating that members from this group attended Protestant church services suggesting that the group limited their membership to Catholic veterans. The Independent's also made the

²³ Keith Jeffery, *Ireland and the Great War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 129-130.

pilgrimage to Gillabbey Rock before returning to the city and dispersing. On 11 November additional church services were held and at least 100 ex-soldiers attended the service at St. Finbarre's, where Rev. H. G. Fleming, who had served in the trenches of the western front for four years with the Irish Guards, conducted the service.²⁴

Later Remembrance Day celebrations became less fragmentary after the erection of a city War Memorial. Dedicated on 17 March 1925, the war memorial became the centerpiece for future commemorative exercises. On 11 November 1925, members of both the British Legion and Cork Independent Ex-Servicemen's Club congregated at the war memorial, along with relatives of the deceased sporting their loved ones' war medals. Representatives from each organization placed a wreath on the memorial and at eleven o'clock all in attendance observed the two minutes silence. Buglers sounded the "Last Post" to conclude the ceremony. When the eleventh of November did not fall on a Sunday, the official parade and commemoration typically took place on the Sunday before or after the eleventh, whichever was closer to the actual date. A few slight changes were made to Cork's commemorative proceedings when the British Legion entered the equation. Typically this included a gathering of ex-servicemen at the cenotaph in the South Mall at 10:30am. The entire contingent then marched toward St. Finbarre's where the Protestant members of the procession attended a special church service. Meanwhile, the rest of the parade continued to Gillabbey Rock for the laying of wreaths there, as had been done in years past. Buglers would sound the "Last Post" followed by a return to the

²⁴ *Cork Examiner*, 10 November, 12 November 1924. Sources indicate a similar series of events the previous year in 1923, when W. T. Cosgrave and the Free State Postmaster-General were in Cork to attend the funeral of one Maurice Healy, and attended the Roman Catholic Mass. *Londonderry Sentinel*, 13 November 1923.

South Mall where wreaths were laid. Again the “Last Post” was sounded, this time to mark the commencement of the two minutes silence. Then “Reveille” denoted the conclusion of the silence, at which point the assemblage marched to the North Cathedral for a special Mass at noon. During the Catholic service, the Protestant ex-servicemen marched from St. Finbarre’s to the North Cathedral where they rejoined the Catholic ex-servicemen. Both groups then marched back to the Cenotaph at the South Mall where the entire series of events ended. Throughout the 1920s and into the 1930s thousands of people attended the ceremonies each year. Estimates in the local press put the number of ex-servicemen in attendance at 2,000 in 1926, 3,000 in 1928, and 4,000 in 1929, with thousands more involved as spectators. In addition, congregations at both church services far exceeded the seating capacity of each building on an annual basis.²⁵

Activities commemorating the Great War dead in Cork tended to be devoid of any hostility or disruptions. The existence of two separate ex-service organizations, however, was bound to cause an occasional problem. Although the sources provide little information as to why, reports on Remembrance Day activities in 1932 indicated tension between the British Legion and the Independents. Clearly, the differences between the two groups were well known because the clergy at both the Protestant and the Catholic services that year called for a return to the comradeship forged during the war. That year the groups opted to parade separately and the friction between them came to a head at the cenotaph when a disagreement occurred over the use of the memorial park. The cenotaph

²⁵ *Cork Examiner*, 11 November 1929. A review of the *Cork Examiner* on or around 11 November each year reveals the details of the Remembrance Day activities in Cork. The bulk of this section was taken from the 1929 edition, but the entire process remained consistent from year-to-year.

had been erected from subscriptions from all ex-servicemen and it would be unfair to deny any section of the ex-service community access on Remembrance Day. Eventually the park was opened but the members of the British Legion chose to conduct their wreath laying ceremony at a later date. The remaining ex-servicemen followed through with their wreath laying ceremony and apologized to the gathered crowd for the public display of hostility, minor as it was. Future reports fail to mention any continuation of hostility between the two Cork groups, so despite the occasional dispute within the ex-service community, Remembrance Day celebrations in Cork remained vibrant and the community at large appeared unaffected by the veterans' internal struggles.²⁶

The degree of cooperation across religious lines in Cork's Remembrance Day activities distinguishes it from Dublin. In the capital, ex-servicemen and their supporters came together for the cenotaph ceremony, but other aspects of Remembrance Day were done separately. Small processions often marched to their respective churches, but these actions took place independently of the main procession to the Phoenix Park and cenotaph ceremony. In Cork, Protestant and Catholic ex-servicemen attended their respective religious services, but they coordinated their activities in such a way to ensure that the entire ex-service community shared a commemorative experience as similar as possible. Considering the heightened republican presence in the county during the Irish Civil War when the IRA targeted members of the county's Protestant community, oftentimes ex-servicemen, the willingness of Cork's ex-service community to overlook their political and sectarian differences to come together in the years following the civil war speaks to the power of the memory of the Great War among Cork veterans.

²⁶ *Cork Examiner*, 7 November, 12 November 1932.

Derry

As the second largest city in Northern Ireland, Derry exists as a natural comparison to Belfast. Over the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Derry established itself as a center of textile manufacture. By 1902, Derry City was home to thirty-eight factories with another 113 locations in nearby rural areas. Heavy industry in the form of shipbuilding also bolstered Derry's economy for much of the nineteenth century, but by the dawn of the twentieth most of the firms struggled or closed. A brief boom during and immediately following the First World War could not boost the long-term health of the shipbuilding industry in Derry.²⁷

Like, the regional capital, Derry experienced a considerable amount of sectarian problems. Gerrymandering ensured that Unionists controlled local government offices. Although Catholics in Derry enjoyed a numerical majority, their political will received virtually no attention under unionist-dominated administrations. Shortly after the First World War a proportional representation voting system was implemented in Derry and Irish nationalists won control of the city Corporation. However, as Ireland shifted from war with Britain to civil war in the 1919-1923 period, Northern Minister of Home Affairs Dawson Bates, quickly put an end to proportional representation and returned to the earlier, gerrymandered system. Unionist mayors ran Derry City uninterrupted until 1968, when a development commission replaced the old Corporation. Upon reassuming control of the city in January 1923, Unionist Councillor H. H. Greenway requested the city fly the Union Jack and invoked the memory of the Ulstermen who died during the Great War

²⁷ Sean McMahon, *A History of County Derry* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 2004), 90-93.

at the first meeting of the new administration.²⁸ Greenway's action suggests that Derry's nationalist, Catholic population had little to do with the Great War. In fact, the Catholic clergy in Derry, which held significant sway over Derry's Catholics, supported Redmond and the Irish Parliamentary Party. When Redmond committed the Irish National Volunteers to the cause of the Great War, Derry's Catholic Clergy encouraged their flock to help in the effort to stem German militarism. Out of the 4,717 Irish National Volunteers members in Derry City, only 111 opted not to enlist.²⁹

In Northern Ireland, Remembrance Day activities faced far less opposition than comparable festivities in the Free State. However, the broader acceptance of the North's role in the Great War did not expedite the development of a standardized, ritualistic observance. Like other places throughout Ireland and Britain, war memorials did not immediately appear in Northern Irish cities. However, both Cork and Derry managed to erect theirs before the major centers of Dublin and Belfast. While Cork dedicated their city memorial in 1925, Derry's was not complete and functional until 1927.

Prior to the completion of the Derry war memorial in the city center, known as the Diamond, Remembrance Day ceremonies took place at various locations throughout the city. The 1920 commemoration consisted of a general observation of the two minutes silence, but no formal ceremony or procession existed to centralize the remembrance ritual. The only organizational measure taken that year involved coordinating a ship's

²⁸ McMahan, 110; Ronan Gallagher, *Violence and nationalist politics in Derry City, 1920-1923* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2003), 61. See also, Colm Fox, *The Making of a Minority: Political Developments in Derry and the North, 1912-1925* (Londonderry: Guildhall Press, 1997).

²⁹ McMahan, 107.

siren to sound when the Guildhall clock struck eleven to notify the residents of Derry of the commencement of the two minutes silence. In 1922, ex-servicemen and citizens gathered in the Diamond to observe the silence, while 1924 saw the observance moved to the Guildhall Square. The lack of a memorial meant that no wreaths were laid and the only accompaniment to the silence was the presence of regimental bands playing appropriate musical selections, as well as buglers to sound the “Last Post.”³⁰

Given the political climate in Ireland from 1920-1923, it comes as little surprise that the nationalist administration in Derry at that time exercised caution in Remembrance Day activities; most Irish cities did so at this time. By the time open hostilities ceased in 1923, control of the city Corporation was back in Unionist hands, and the political message behind Councillor Greenway’s comments echoed sentiments held throughout Northern Ireland that nationalists and republicans were not welcome at commemorative events likely alienated Derry’s Catholic, Nationalist veterans.

Once the Irish Civil War ended and Unionists assumed control over the city corporation, administrators turned their attention toward erecting a city war memorial. Remembrance Day observance in the Maiden City returned to the Diamond in 1925 because that site had been chosen for the city’s war memorial. Also, 1925 marked the first year that the city corporation took part in the Remembrance Day services.³¹ Participation from local and regional officials was one of the main differences between commemorative events in the north and the south. Despite this difference in terms of top-

³⁰ *Londonderry Sentinel*, 11 November, 13 November 1920; 14 November 1922; 13 November 1924.

³¹ *Belfast Telegraph*, 11 November 1925.

down organization and support, Remembrance Day received consistent support from the general public in both areas.

Cooperation between the British Legion and the city corporation helped Derry's 1925 Remembrance Day ceremony expand in format. Between 10:30am and 11am a regimental band played musical selections at the Diamond while spectators assembled in the area. Shortly before eleven the leaders of the corporation, led by the Mayor, dressed in their official robes, marched from the Guildhall Square, through the gate in the old city's walls, up hill to the Diamond. Precisely at eleven, the two minutes silence commenced with the spectators bowing and baring their heads. Following the sounding of the "Last Post" the silence ended and the Mayor, not the local leader of the British Legion, laid a wreath on the site of the war memorial, which was followed by a wreath from the local Rotary Club and a few selections by the band before the "Reveille" and National Anthem, thus ending the ceremony.³² In 1926 the structure of the ceremony changed slightly, adding specific musical selection to the pre-silence component of the ceremony. A few minutes before eleven o'clock the band played Chopin's "Funeral March" and "The Londonderry Air," which were followed immediately by the "Last Post" at 10:58am and presenting of arms by the honor guard. The two minutes silence began at eleven, and the "Reveille" was used to signify its conclusion. During the wreath laying the band continued to play musical selections such as "Land of Hope and Glory," and the National Anthem ended the ceremony. The early years of the Legion's participation in the Derry commemoration was predominantly organizational. The Legion

³² *Londonderry Sentinel*, 12 November 1925; *Derry Standard*, 11 November 1925.

provided poppy wreaths for many of the city's local war memorials, but did not formally lay a wreath during the main ceremony. Many wreaths were laid on the Sunday before or after 11 November, depending on the year, or on the day itself.³³ Deeper community involvement was apparent that year as 400 Ex-Servicemen in Derry were given food vouchers valued at 5s each as a Remembrance Day gift. The money came from what was left of the war funds of the Londonderry voluntary war workers.³⁴

Nineteen twenty-seven saw the continued evolution of Derry's Remembrance Day ritual, aided with the completion and dedication of the Diamond War Memorial in June of that year. Attendance at the first commemorative ceremony at the new war memorial was impressive. Typically, Remembrance Day in Derry centered on Protestant participants and events in the city. However, despite inclement weather, a diverse and representative body consisting of all classes and creeds assembled to mark the ninth anniversary of the end of the Great War. The content of the ceremony itself remained the same as the previous year, with the exception of two additional wreaths laid on behalf of the British Legion and the city's garrison by members of each. After the National Anthem, additional wreaths were laid on the war memorial by various regiments, including a wreath laid on behalf of the 16th (Irish) Division, old comrades associations, local organizations, and other individuals.³⁵ The physical presence of a city war memorial effectively altered the dynamic of the Derry Remembrance Day ceremony by allowing

³³ *Londonderry Sentinel*, 9 November, 11 November 1926.

³⁴ *Irish Times*, 12 November 1926.

³⁵ *Londonderry Sentinel*, 12 November 1927.

wider public participation. Whereby in previous years official participants laid two or three wreaths at the memorial site, the new memorial provided a permanent outlet for individual commemorations in addition to officially sanctioned ones. In effect, spectators engaged a dual commemorative experience, whereby they observed the formal commemoration ritual performed by the city corporation and the British Legion, and, once that had concluded, they had the option of conducting their own commemorative act, such as laying a wreath. In the coming years the number of wreaths laid by private groups and individuals continued to increase, but the format of the Remembrance Day program remained consistent with that developed over the 1926-28 period. Eventually, a garden of remembrance was added to the proceedings, located in the Diamond area, that allowed citizens to place poppies or crosses in memory of loved ones.³⁶

Parading has already been shown as an important performative aspect of Great War commemorations, but in Derry this form of pageantry did not appear and become incorporated into the main ceremony until after the erection of the Diamond memorial. More commonly, in the 1920s, the militaristic component of the Derry ceremonies consisted of a guard of honor assembled at the ceremonial site. The first reports of parading ex-servicemen appeared in 1928 when a large number of them paraded through the city on their way to the ceremony while performing various drill movements.³⁷ By 1933 the order of the Remembrance Day program expanded to incorporate a procession before the start of the ceremony in the Diamond. The starting time for the entire affair

³⁶ *Derry Standard*, 13 November 1931.

³⁷ *Derry Journal*, 12 November 1928.

was pushed back to 9:55am when ex-soldiers would meet in order to “fall in” at 10am. Participants in the parade included members of the British Legion, the Boy Scouts, the Girl Guides, the Boys’ Brigades, the Royal Navy, the Royal Ulster Constabulary, and the 10th Battalion of the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, which drew most of its men from Derry. Once all of the participants were organized, they marched from the Guildhall to the Diamond at 10:45am and took up their positions there. Upon arriving at the Diamond the remainder of the ceremony mirrored the events of previous years.³⁸ Compared to the parades that took place in Dublin and Cork in the Free State, the procession of ex-servicemen in Derry was much smaller in size and scope. Widespread support for the troops and their sacrifice in the North mitigated the need for grandiose parades through loyalist sections of the city and concerns about safety and the threat of disruption dissuaded organizers from parading through nationalist sections of the city. Sectarian issues affected the British Legion in Derry simply because there was a dearth of participation in Legion or other commemorative activities by Catholics. This situation was markedly different from Cork and Dublin where a significant number of Catholic veterans attended remembrance mass and participated in commemorative rituals. Members of the Legion in Derry were aware of the problem and sought to include more Catholics in their operations, and especially in Remembrance Day events. As a non-sectarian organization, the lack of religious diversity projected an image of the Legion to the public that its members did not always find appropriate.³⁹ While the local press made

³⁸ *Derry Standard*, 13 November 1933.

³⁹ *Derry Standard*, 14 November 1930.

sure to mention that no Nationalist member of the Corporation attended the Remembrance Day ceremony at the Diamond, that does not mean that Catholics neglected to attend, as not all Catholics were nationalists or republicans. In fact, in 1934 a newly formed group called the Catholic Ex-servicemen's Association paraded to mass and laid a wreath on the Diamond War Memorial.⁴⁰

Belfast

While Dublin was home to the largest Remembrance Day spectacle in the Free State, Belfast occupied the same status in the North. As Ireland's most heavily industrialized city, Belfast hosted a significant working class population. Belfast was the flagship loyalist stronghold in Northern Ireland and Protestant loyalists dominated the city corporation. Political and religious tensions ran high, especially in the abutting Falls Road (Catholic) and Shankill Road (Protestant) neighborhoods on the city's north and west sides. With its concentrated, urban population, thousands of men from Belfast volunteered for the Ulster Volunteer Force and subsequently for the British Army after the establishment of the 36th Division. After the war, Belfast enjoyed widespread support for Remembrance Day commemorations.

The Belfast ceremonies followed a similar trajectory in their codification as those in other Irish cities. On the first anniversary of the Armistice the Lord Mayor simply requested that the citizens of Belfast adhere to the King's request to cease work and observe the two minutes silence. This was done as the principle commemorative exercise in Belfast, accompanied by a general stoppage of work for all businesses, utility and transportation services, and schools. Brief services were held at churches throughout the

⁴⁰ *Dublin Evening Mail*, 10 November 1934.

city, and the Salvation Army conducted a service at Belfast City Hall from 10:55-11:15am on 11 November.⁴¹

The following year the main civic observance in Belfast started to acquire greater structure. Outside City Hall, the Lord Mayor and other members of the city corporation congregated shortly before eleven in the morning, accompanied by thousands of Belfast's citizens. Two military buglers timed their rendition of "Last Post" to conclude at eleven o'clock sharp to signal the start of the two minutes silence. At the same time the flag atop City Hall was lowered to half-mast and two red flares were fired off from the top the building. At the conclusion of the two minutes the flag was returned to full mast.⁴² In terms of program structure, 1921 saw the addition of wreath laying to the main local ceremony. Interestingly this was done before eleven o'clock and included wreaths from organizations and individuals alike. The "Last Post," the two minutes silence, and "Reveille" followed this after which the ceremony concluded and the crowd dispersed. This format quickly became the standard program for most of the 1920s. In 1921, the *Northern Whig*, a staunchly loyalist publication, pointed out that members of every class attended a civic ceremony at city hall before the two minutes silence, but the Sinn Fein, Nationalist, and Labour members of the city corporation were all conspicuously absent from the festivities. The absence of these elected officials in no way meant that their private citizen supporters abstained from attending. In fact, the *Belfast Telegraph* emphasized the diversity of the estimated 20,000 people at the ceremony that spanned socio-economic, political, and religious spectrums. Belfast's other daily newspapers

⁴¹ *Northern Whig*, 8 November 1919; *Belfast Newsletter*, 11 November 1919.

⁴² *Belfast Newsletter*, 12 November 1920.

mentioned those city officials in attendance, but drew no ire for those who were absent.⁴³ The *Whig*'s editorial perspective carried with it open disdain and hostility toward the non-loyalist factions in Belfast's city government. Contrasting reports on the composition of the crowd from the other publications focused on the pluralism of those in attendance and undermined the claims made by the *Whig* on a popular level.

Each year for the Belfast civic Remembrance Day ceremony a temporary cenotaph was erected as the centerpiece of the commemorative exercise.⁴⁴ In 1929 a permanent memorial was completed on the grounds of City Hall and the unveiling and dedication ceremony were planned for Remembrance Day. The Garden of Remembrance was constructed on the west end of the City Hall grounds. At one end stood a thirty-foot cenotaph that would become the focal point of Belfast's civic Remembrance Day ceremonies from that point forward. One of the most salient aspects of the Garden of Remembrance from a ceremonial and participation standpoint was the sections of lawn in front of the cenotaph. This area was open to the public to place items of remembrance, such as flowers, wreaths, and crosses, and one strip of land was reserved for members of the public to plant Flanders poppies.⁴⁵ With thousands in attendance every year, the Garden of Remembrance accommodated the largest Remembrance Day ceremony in Northern Ireland on an annual basis. Furthermore, the Garden of Remembrance functioned as a surrogate graveyard for the war dead. Since the bodies of soldiers killed

⁴³ *Northern Whig*, 12 November 1921; *Belfast Telegraph*, 11 November 1921; *Belfast Newsletter*, 12 November 1921.

⁴⁴ *Irish Times*, 12 November 1923.

⁴⁵ *Northern Whig*, 9 November 1929; *Belfast Telegraph*, 11 November 1929.

in the war were not returned home and buried locally, the Garden of Remembrance enabled family members and loved ones to have an easily accessible “gravesite” where they could mourn their dead, even if it was only once a year. Following the Remembrance Day ceremonies, the items left in the Garden of Remembrance would be collected and burned, the ashes taken to France and Belgium to be scattered over the graves of British soldiers.⁴⁶ Poppies were recycled in other means as well and local hospitals encouraged the public to donate their old poppies so they could be used to decorate their facilities during the Christmas holidays.⁴⁷

In addition, it is worth mentioning that the British Legion continued to play a major, public role in Remembrance Day celebrations throughout the country. Typically, at least one high ranking official from each Legion Area, North and South, attended the main Remembrance Day ceremony in the other area. For example, in 1925, Major Henry Lefroy represented the Southern Area of the Legion at the Belfast civic ceremony and laid a wreath on the cenotaph to commemorate the soldiers from the North who died in the Great War, and the Northern Ireland Area chose Captain H. J. Walsh to represent them at the Dublin ceremony. Similarly, the previous year a representative for General Sir Oliver Nugent attended the Dublin Remembrance Day ceremony, laying a wreath on behalf of the 36th (Ulster) Division.⁴⁸ By making a conscious effort to maintain positive relations between the Legion Areas, the leaders of the British Legion in Ireland helped to

⁴⁶ *Belfast Newsletter*, 9 November 1934.

⁴⁷ *Belfast Newsletter*, 13 November 1924.

⁴⁸ Royal British Legion, Belfast (Hereafter RBL), Minutes of a meeting of the Finance & General purposes committee, 10 November 1925; *Irish Times*, 11 November 1924, 12 November 1925.

foster and publicize the shared experience and respect within Ireland's ex-service community.

In Belfast the location of the wreath-laying portion of the program created a different commemorative experience in the North's capital from other areas. Although a certain hierarchy existed as to the order in which organizations laid their wreaths on the cenotaph in Belfast, private groups and citizens were able to take part in the ceremony by laying a wreath if they chose to do so. Since this occurred before the two minutes silence and the conclusion of the proceedings, the average citizen had an opportunity to observe not only a visual spectacle, but to participate in a collective ritual. In Dublin and Derry, the wreath laying came at the end of the ceremony and only after it concluded were people able to deposit their commemorative articles. However, the effect of these post-ceremony actions essentially denied these individuals the attention and legitimacy given to those who were part of the official program. For example, in 1933 a report of the Dublin ceremony stated "[e]verything was over, but hundreds of men and women waited until the crowd cleared away so that they could lay their own wreaths."⁴⁹ Granted, the Belfast ceremony did not have time to accommodate every willing participant, by catering to some it instructed everyone that they possessed the potential to participate in the official ceremony. Of course individuals or groups had the option of conducting private ceremonies at the city war memorial as well. The 14th Battalion Royal Irish Rifles Old Comrades Association held a wreath laying ceremony at the Belfast Garden of Remembrance prior to their annual dinner and reunion in 1930. The private ceremony

⁴⁹ *Belfast Telegraph*, 11 November 1933.

gained the approval of the association because “[t]his new departure enabled a much larger number to participate in the ceremony, and in response to the desire of the vast majority will be adopted in the future.”⁵⁰ In total, over 150 former members of the battalion attended the ceremony, a number small enough so that people felt like an integral part of the commemorative process and not just observers. Other locations maintained a distinct separation between the spectacle of the Remembrance ceremony as viewed by those in attendance and the performance ritual conducted by the official participants. In Belfast, the lines between spectacle and performance ritual blurred, providing on the whole a more intimate commemorative experience. In the major Irish cities, Belfast, then, proved to be the exception rather than the rule.

Throughout Northern Ireland, Remembrance Day took on a decidedly loyalist, Protestant tenor. While it might be easy to label the deficient participation of Catholics and nationalists in the north as a case of nationalist backlash against the memory of the Great War, the situation was more complex. Certainly the situation in Dublin fits the mold of a nationalist backlash because tacit opposition came from the Free State government and direct opposition came from republican sections of the population. In Northern Ireland the stance of Irish nationalists toward Remembrance Day no doubt mirrored the position held by people in the south who shared their political views, however, there is little evidence to suggest that nationalists in Derry proactively interfered with Remembrance Day celebrations. Protestant loyalists dominated Remembrance Day events and largely focused their rhetoric on Ulster’s role in the war and the sacrifices of the 36th Division at the Somme. These tropes acted as an additional

⁵⁰ *Belfast Telegraph*, 12 November 1930.

deterrent to Catholic ex-serviceman in the north who did not fit into these war myths by marginalizing their war experience. Even ex-servicemen who might otherwise overlook the political and sectarian differences with their northern comrades, like the ex-servicemen in Cork, opted out of Remembrance Day activities there because they felt unwelcomed. Yet, there was another annual exercise conducted on behalf of the ex-servicemen in Ireland that allowed anyone to participate easily in a commemorative enterprise: the British Legion Poppy Appeal.

The Poppy Appeal

Throughout Britain and Ireland many ex-servicemen and their families faced economic hardship. A lack of adequate housing and employment, especially in Ireland, placed many veterans' families in distress. Early ex-servicemen's organizations lacked the funds to provide assistance to even the most hard-pressed cases. Following the amalgamation of ex-servicemen's organizations into the British Legion in 1921, that organization turned, almost immediately, to fundraising as a way to bridge the gap between those in need and the dearth of available resources to help them. That same year the Poppy Appeal was born. The idea to sell poppies as a fundraiser originally came from a French woman, Anne Guerin, who sold poppies for charity and pitched the idea to the Legion. This, coupled with a poignant poem written by a Canadian soldier, Colonel John McCrea, titled "In Flanders Fields" that mentioned the poppy, ensured that the Flanders poppy would become a symbol associated with the war. At first the Legion was hesitant to undertake the fundraiser because in the first year they had a short period of time to coordinate everything, but ultimately the Legion bought into Guerin's idea. Earl Douglas

Haig, who held the position of National President of the Legion, issued an appeal to the British and Irish public stating that everyone should wear a poppy every 11th of November in memory of the fallen. Haig issued a similar appeal for people to purchase poppies every year during his tenure as National President of the Legion, as did his successors. Because of Haig's early influence in the Poppy Appeal it was commonly referred to as the "Haig Fund."⁵¹

In 1921, the Legion issued what may be considered their Poppy Appeal mission statement, which described the goals the Appeal would help achieve. According to the Legion, "the sale of the Red Poppies has a four-fold object. Those who buy will commemorate 'Remembrance Day,' they will pay homage to the men who made the great sacrifice, they will help mitigate the distress prevailing amongst ex-service men of all ranks and their dependents, and they will also assist to benefit the sorely-stricken women and children in the devastated areas of France."⁵² This last aim related to the fact that, initially, the poppies sold to the British public were imported from France. Within a few years, however, the Legion established their own workshop in Britain employing disabled ex-servicemen who made the artificial poppies for the annual Poppy Appeal. Although the Poppy Appeal was an instant success in the United Kingdom, it would be a number of years before all the pieces were in place to ensure that the Appeal ran smoothly and effectively. The same was true in Ireland, where the Legion of Irish Ex-Servicemen remained a separate entity from the British Legion until 1925 and needed to

⁵¹ Brian Harding, *Keeping Faith: The history of the Royal British Legion* (Barnsley, South Yorkshire: Leo Cooper, 2001), 121-122.

⁵² *British Legion*, vol. 1, no. 5 (Nov 1921), 99.

assemble their Poppy Appeal infrastructure, which was a more difficult task in Ireland without assistance from the government and large sections of the population hostile to the idea.

Money for the Poppy Appeal came from two principle sources, street sellers and church collections. In Ireland, Protestant churches generally participated without hesitation, and many Catholic churches took up collections for the Poppy Fund during the interwar years. Once all the money had been collected in a given area it would be counted and sent on to the Legion Headquarters in London where the Central Relief Committee decided where the money would go and how much would be given. It was up to the Legion headquarters to determine how much money to allocate to various Legion projects. Most of the money was redistributed to local Legion branches that could then put the funds to use for local initiatives. Legion branches that had the greatest need for financial assistance benefitted from the redistribution of Poppy Appeal monies. In Ireland, the deplorable conditions most of the ex-servicemen faced meant that Irish branches often benefitted greatly from the Poppy Appeal. For instance, between October 1932 and September 1933, the Free State collected £8,133 for the Poppy Fund, while the British Legion distributed £31,138 in grants and relief. Through the British Legion, ex-servicemen in the Free State received considerable assistance, to the tune of three to four times the amount contributed from their Area. The Poppy Appeal quickly became the Legion's primary source of income, and many people understandably assumed that the sole mission of the Legion was to take care of ex-servicemen in dire straits. While benevolent work took up much of the Legion's resources, the organization also did a lot

to maintain the camaraderie between ex-servicemen through a wide variety of activities and initiatives (see Chapter 2).⁵³

Like the Remembrance Day ceremonies, the Poppy Appeal allowed individuals to participate in a dual commemorative process. Firstly, wearing a poppy demonstrated one's acknowledgement of the sacrifices made by Irish soldiers during the Great War. Women in Dublin were often spotted wearing more than one poppy signifying the loss of multiple loved ones in the war. Secondly, the money paid for the poppies went toward alleviating the poor conditions faced by many ex-servicemen. So while commemorative Remembrance Day ceremonies were intended as a contemplative and largely observed spectacle, and were, for the most part, passive activities, the transaction necessary to acquire a poppy forced those remembering the war and its soldiers to be proactive in their support for the men and the maintenance of their memory. In the Free State, it took a few years for the Poppy Appeal to gain traction, and even at its height it did not rival the returns seen in Britain, but given the difference in overall population and other socio-economic and political considerations the Irish Appeal fared well. Several types of poppies were available for purchase through the Appeal and depending on the type of poppy one purchased the flowers were sold for *2s 6d*, *1s, 6d*, and *3d*, which made it possible for people across the economic spectrum to contribute.⁵⁴ By the mid-1920s poppy sellers in the Free State did brisk business on Poppy Day.

⁵³ Niall Barr, *The Lion and the Poppy: British Veterans, Politics, and Society, 1921-1939* (London and Westport, CT: Praeger, 2005), 99; *Irish Times*, 28 October 1933.

⁵⁴ *Irish Times*, 4 November 1924.

Selling poppies in large Irish cities such as Dublin and Cork was not done willy-nilly. In fact, ensuring a successful appeal required multiple areas of coordination. The number and location of poppy depots needed to be established, volunteers needed to be recruited to sell and resupply poppies, transportation had to be procured, and measures had to be taken to securely collect, count, and deposit the monies received. Furthermore, the British Legion had to apply to the Free State government for permission to sell poppies. In later years, poppy sellers in each district of the city applied directly to their district's police superintendent for permission. In 1922, an estimated 5,000 poppies were sold in Dublin, but demand far outpaced supply. The following year 150,000 poppies were sent to Ireland, half of which remained for sale in Dublin while the remainders were sent to Cork and other provincial centers. At 8 o'clock in the morning on Saturday, 10 November 1923, Dublin's streets thronged with over 400 poppy sellers and by 10 o'clock trucks were dispatched throughout the city to deliver refills to depleted poppy depots. People purchasing poppies in the Free State capital largely did so freely, creating easy work for the poppy sellers who had very little "selling" to do. A total of £920 was raised in Dublin for the 1923 Poppy Appeal. The scarlet flower appeared in some unlikely places as well. Members of the National Army wore poppies in their hats, and so too did ex-servicemen now under the employ of the Dublin Metropolitan Police, who wore their war medals to complement their poppies for the occasion.⁵⁵

Throughout the 1920s the Poppy Appeal continued to gain support throughout Ireland. Reports on the 1924 Appeal claimed over 220,000 poppies sold in the Irish Free

⁵⁵ NAI/DT/S3370B, Letter from Tynan to Chief Commissioner, Garda Siochana, 21 September 1933; *Irish Times*, 17 November 1923, 4 December 1925.

State, where demand outpaced supply, raising a combined £3,645. County Dublin accounted for the largest portion of the total sum with £2,471 and County Cork accounted for £371 11s 9d of the total Free State contributions. Out of the county totals, the cities of Dublin and Cork raised £1,604 and £199, respectively. When the city totals of Dublin and Cork are compared to those of Belfast and Derry in the north, the returns are quite similar. Belfast accounted for £1,170 8d, including monies collected at church services, while Derry gave £296 11s 5d.⁵⁶ Strong support for the Poppy Appeal in the Free State only a year after the Irish Civil War illustrates the continued acknowledgement and sympathy the Irish public held for the war and its veterans.

From year-to-year individual poppies were the most commonly purchased item during the appeal and generated the bulk of the Appeal's revenue. Almost a quarter of a million poppies were allocated specifically for Dublin in 1925, over a three-fold increase over a two-year period. In addition, other poppy items helped to increase sales and pad the Appeal's coffers. Poppy wreaths became increasingly popular, ranging in price from 12s 6d to £3 10s, and "Special orders were received for wreaths which would cost from £5 to £15, but these could not be supplied, as the most expensive wreath made at the Poppy Day Factory in London cost only £3 10s." Furthermore, the volunteer spirit continued to thrive with reports from Legion Headquarters in Dublin stating that more trucks were pledged for Legion use on Poppy Day than were required. All of this served to, once again, improve the total contributions from Dublin City and County, which,

⁵⁶ *Irish Times*, 12 December 1924, 1 September 1925.

according to the British Legion (Southern Ireland) Area increased to £1,634 16s 9d and £2,680 10s 10d, respectively.⁵⁷

Likewise in Cork, poppy sales increased throughout the 1920s. Using the Poppy Day returns provided by the British Legion for the 1924 Appeal as a base measurement, Cork, and other provincial cities, stepped up their organizational efforts for future appeals.⁵⁸ Poppy Day receipts for Cork in 1927 estimated an increase of £100 over the previous year's take, for a total of £500. An anonymous donor gave an additional £100 on top of the money collected through traditional channels, something that was repeated in succeeding years. Nevertheless, the amount raised in Cork remained insufficient to meet the needs of local ex-servicemen. Clearly, the people of Cork were able and willing to donate to the Haig Fund, but the sheer number of ex-servicemen in Cork and their level of destitution made it difficult for the local Legion branch to cater to the needs of all the men in the area. The second half of the 1920s saw the Cork branch of the Legion requesting additional monies from the Central Fund in London.⁵⁹ Cork's citizens showed a good deal of support for the Poppy Appeal, but despite their willingness to give the destitution of local ex-servicemen proved to be far greater. By the late 1920s, the British Legion relief fund in Cork had over 1,500 cases on their books. The chairman of the Cork branch of the relief fund stated that these constituted only the most destitute cases and

⁵⁷ *Irish Times*, 12 November 1923, 11 November 1925, 13 November 1925, 4 December 1925.

⁵⁸ *Irish Times*, 24 October 1925.

⁵⁹ *Irish Times*, 24 November 1927, 28 October 1929.

that many more needed assistance than the fund could handle.⁶⁰ Considering that just over 6,000 men enlisted in the Great War from Cork City a significant amount found themselves in less than ideal conditions after the war, and the figure becomes even higher when factoring in the number of men killed in the war, re-enlisted, or settled elsewhere.

Those who wished to contribute to the Poppy Fund in Cork did not have to visit the poppy depots set up around town. Beginning in the late 1920s and extending through the 1930s another option appeared with the establishment of the annual Poppy Fund Dance. Typically held at the Arcadia ballroom, the Poppy Fund Dance was an opportunity for Corkonians to have a night out and help a good cause at the same time. Most attendees wore poppies, and the same flower was the central motif of the hall's decorations. Tickets for the dance typically went on sale a week or two before the actual event. Music and dancing lasted until the early hours of the morning, typically beginning at 9pm and going until 2:30am. For an additional fee, attendees could purchase food specially catered for the event. Reports generally labeled the annual event a success and it did not suffer from lack of attendance through the 1930s. In 1932, the *Cork Examiner* reported that at least 500 couples attended the dance that year, including local roller skating champions Mr. and Mrs. Balmford, who put on an exhibition for those in attendance.⁶¹

By the 1930s the Poppy Appeal in Ireland arrived at a general level of stasis. At the beginning of the decade the returns from the 1930 appeal amounted to £19,934 7s 1d

⁶⁰ NAI 3/493/6/Box 1/F5, "STATEMENT of the CORK BRANCH of the BRITISH LEGION RELIEF FUND," n.d. (circa 1927).

⁶¹ *Cork Examiner*, 2 November, 10 November 1932, 10 November 1933, 10 November, 17 November 1934.

for the entire island. Northern Ireland and the Free State each accounted for approximately half of the total, with a difference of about £500 more raised in the North. County returns continued to show Dublin and Cork as far and away the leading contributors in the Free State. In the North, county Antrim led the way with over £5,000, no doubt bolstered by efforts in Belfast, and Londonderry ranked third out of the six northern counties.⁶² Throughout the first half of the 1930s the money received for the annual Poppy Appeal remained fairly consistent by Irish standards. Despite the onset of an economic downturn that affected both the north and the south poppies returns in the Free State declined over the course of the decade, but not sharply. In the North, the Appeal continued to thrive though there were no drastic spikes in poppy sales.

A general election in the Free State in February 1932 put Fianna Fáil, led by Eamon de Valera, in power. As the leader of the anti-treaty movement in the Irish Civil War and a staunch Republican, de Valera had little tolerance for the Remembrance Day displays made by Irish ex-servicemen and the British Legion. While Free State administrators did not oppose the reasons why ex-servicemen wished to commemorate their dead, they did oppose how these men went about doing so. De Valera and other republican leaders viewed the desire to commemorate their fallen comrades as “natural,” but that did not mean Free State leaders had to accept the incorporation of British military symbols and drills. Beginning with Remembrance Day 1932, the government forced the British Legion to alter their commemorative ceremonies, which had become well established and ritualized at that point. However, government officials felt that some elements of Remembrance Day and the Poppy Appeal retained militaristic and imperial

⁶² *Irish Times*, 26 September 1931.

overtones that could prove disruptive in the Free State. That year the police commissioner suggested that greater restrictions be placed on all commemorative activities: the size and number of parades was reduced; Union Jacks were banned completely; during the main procession to Phoenix Park the use of military orders, uniforms, and formations, as well as the execution of military drills were all prohibited; and the sale of Flanders poppies was limited to the tenth and eleventh of November, eliminating additional sales traditionally held on the Sundays preceding and following Remembrance Day. The police commissioner and Minister of Justice claimed that Remembrance Day events put too much stress on the Dublin police force, which needed to guard poppy depots around the clock and required additional personnel to ensure public safety during the parades. When the Cabinet considered these recommendations most were upheld with the exception of the use of military orders and displays, which were allowed, and the sale of poppies modified to include the ninth of November as well.⁶³

These changes, coupled with the fact that the Free State government was only symbolically represented at Remembrance Day ceremonies and the refusal of elected officials, notably the president, to participate in these commemorative exercises, served to distance and marginalize veterans and the memory of the war from the republican power structure. The Free State government's willingness to participate in commemorative activities that took place in other countries, a policy that began with the

⁶³ NAI/DT/S3370B, "Sale of Flanders Poppies and Armistice Parades," 21 September 1932, Memo to Minister of Justice, 27 September 1932; Tom Burke, "'Poppy Day' in the Irish Free State," *Studies* 92 (Winter 2003), 349-358.

first Free State government and continued under de Valera, further complicates the place of Irish Great War commemoration. The juxtaposition of external sympathy with internal apathy increasingly marginalized the memory of the Great War and its survivors in Irish society.⁶⁴ While some may question the role of the British Legion in alienating government officials, the evidence shows that the Legion was nothing but compliant with the government's requests. Clearly, the Legion executive recognized that the only way to ensure that they would receive permission to continue conducting commemorative activities was by adhering to the government's requests. While associations with Britain and its empire were difficult to overcome, the Legion took steps toward curbing them. In fact, the singing of the "God Save The King," ceased to be an official component of the Remembrance Day ceremony before de Valera was voted into office, the attendees initiated any rendition of the song at the ceremony.⁶⁵ Furthermore, Legion members considered Remembrance Day as a solemn, reflective occasion so they understood and respected the difficulties their activities made for the police force. The British Legion in Ireland adapted to the Free State government's increasing restrictions on their commemorative practices. Conversely, the ascension of de Valera and Fianna Fáil into power signaled a shift from toleration of the memory of the Great War in government

⁶⁴ Jane Leonard, "The twinge of memory: Armistice Day and Remembrance Sunday in Dublin since 1919," in *Unionism in Modern Ireland: New Perspectives on Politics and Culture*, Richard English and Graham Walker, ed., (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1996), 106.

⁶⁵ Although it is not entirely clear, reports of the Dublin Remembrance Day ceremony suggest that "God Save The King" was removed from the official program between 1925-1926. By 1927, the program schedule clearly omitted the song; *Irish Times*, 12 November 1925, 12 November 1926, 11 November 1927.

circles to greater restriction on Legion activities in order to stifle the memory of the war that challenged the creation of a single, republican, Irish national identity.

At the midpoint of the decade the 1935 contributions in the Free State saw some of their sharpest drops, with totals from counties Dublin and Cork falling approximately £900 and £300, respectively, from 1930 levels. Throughout the remaining years of the 1930s, Poppy Day returns continued to decline in the Free State. Clearly the restrictions placed on Remembrance Day celebrations by the Free State government began to have a serious impact on the Poppy Appeal by the mid 1930s. Parades were greatly reduced in size and scale, if not banned all together and the display of Union Jacks prohibited. Many in the Free State government felt the parades celebrated the militarism of the British Army, and that was something Irish citizen should not have to face. Displaying Union Jacks, too, exacerbated Anglo-Irish tensions by waving the flag of their former oppressors directly, sometimes literally, in the face of the Irish people.⁶⁶ The Legion proudly displayed the Union Jack for many years during Remembrance Day festivities, but while the flag was a component of their military identity the Union Jack was not the symbol the Legion associated with Remembrance. Members of the disbanded Irish regiments were more concerned with regimental colors and the poppy, concerns that illustrated the Hiberno-centric nature of their commemorations, as well as the essential place of dead and living comrades. Irish ex-servicemen retained their Irish identity despite their service to the British Empire. Legion acquiescence to removing the Union Jack from their remembrance exercises reinforces this fact. Nevertheless, as a result of

⁶⁶ *Irish Times*, 10 September 1936; Brian Hanley, "Poppy Day in the '20s and '30s," *History Ireland*, 7:1 (1999), 5-6.

the new restrictions on Remembrance Day activities handed down by the Fianna Fáil government the pageantry and spectacle associated with Remembrance Day and the Poppy Appeal began to subside. It became increasingly difficult for the casual supporter to continue to do so, and lower turnouts for Remembrance Day events translated into lower returns for the Haig Fund.

The early years of the Poppy Appeal in Northern Ireland shared similarities and dissimilarities with efforts in the Free State. Organization for the selling of poppies fell to the British Legion in Derry. To ensure adequate coverage of the city, it was split up into multiple districts, which allowed the women selling poppies to concentrate on specific areas. The individual who brought back the highest total was given an honor for their hard work. The difference in poppy sales between Derry and Belfast in the north was similar to those between Cork and Dublin in the Free State. The smaller cities raised an appreciable amount of money given their size and level of organization. In 1927, early reports of the Derry Poppy Appeal suggested that the city contributed about £400 when all sources were taken into account.⁶⁷ Like the Poppy Appeal in general, once the entire operation became standardized, the returns in Derry continued to rise and set new records almost annually.⁶⁸

However, one noticeable difference between Cork and Derry was the level of promotion for the annual Poppy Appeal. In the Derry press local retailers took out ads to notify people of the availability of poppies. Oftentimes the editors of the paper placed

⁶⁷ *Derry Standard*, 14 November 1927.

⁶⁸ See for example, *Derry Standard*, 14 November 1930, which lists the local funds contributed to the Poppy Appeal throughout the 1920s.

simple advertisements and artwork around stories about upcoming commemorative events, usually with phrases like “Give generously for your Poppy,” reminding people to purchase poppies for Remembrance Day.⁶⁹ In 1932, members of the Poppy Day Committee in Derry echoed the need to support the annual appeal sent out by the Legion headquarters. Rev. J. G. MacManaway, committee secretary, noted the destruction of a large amount of poppies due to a fire in the London poppy factory meant that fewer poppies would be available that year, and that in order to meet the needs of local ex-servicemen people should give as much as they can afford. In a worsening global economy in the early 1930s the needs of the ex-servicemen increased, which increased the need for a successful poppy sale. Fortunately, 1932 saw a new record collection on Poppy Day, even though there were not enough flowers for all who wanted them. Nevertheless, some citizens bypassed the poppy sellers and went to the Legion headquarters in Derry to donate money even though doing so meant they missed out on getting a poppy.⁷⁰ Throughout the 1930s most years the Poppy Day collection meant a new local record, but even when a new record was not set the total collected was never drastically lower than the previous year.

Poppy Day in Belfast provided an opportunity for its citizens to support the ex-service community, too. A 1924 editorial in the *Belfast Newsletter* urged the citizens of Belfast to wear a poppy on Remembrance Day, stating “[o]ur debt to the dead can only be paid to the living.” At the same time, it was also suggested that a substantial return on

⁶⁹ Glancing through almost any Northern Irish paper in the weeks prior to Remembrance Day one will find numerous advertisements for poppy sellers and the Earl Haig Fund.

⁷⁰ *Derry Standard*, 31 October 1932, 14 November 1932.

poppy sales in Belfast would demonstrate the loyalty of the city to the cause of remembrance and raise its standing above smaller cities that are deemed more important because of their success in raising funds for the Poppy Appeal.⁷¹ Although poppy sales in Belfast proper were strong, there was concern that the organizational efforts in the suburbs did not produce satisfactory results. The newspaper reported that in some suburban districts no poppies were seen at all.⁷² Unfortunately no information is given as to the specific districts, so it is unclear if this was just a casual observation, an attempt to shame some loyalist areas, or to castigate some nationalist areas.

Belfast took great pride in celebrating Remembrance Day and collecting for the Haig Fund, and derived a significant amount of pride from these activities. For this reason, the Poppy Day returns for 1924 surprised many people in Belfast. That year Dublin made an impressive showing, surpassing that of loyalist stronghold Belfast. Returns from 1924 created a healthy competition between the two cities the following year. Organizers in Belfast sought to improve their sales, while at the same time they cast doubt as to whether Dublin would be able to maintain such high poppy sales.⁷³ True to their word, the citizens of Belfast made an outstanding effort during the following year's Poppy Appeal, with early reports stating over 100,000 poppies sold before noon and demand far exceeding supply. Secretary of the Belfast Poppy Appeal committee, Mr. W.

⁷¹ *Belfast Newsletter*, 11 November 1924.

⁷² *Belfast Newsletter*, 12 November 1924.

⁷³ *Irish Times*, 24 October 1925.

J. Wilson said that the citizens of Belfast responded to the Appeal “liberally and enthusiastically.”⁷⁴

Most Northern Irish branches of the Legion participated in the Poppy Appeal, and in 1925 only four out of the forty-two branches in the Area were unable to take part. Therefore, individual legion branches were not forced to participate in the Appeal, and local conditions undoubtedly played a role in a branch’s ability to organize and contribute, but this does not mean that individuals from those areas were prohibited from giving to the Fund.⁷⁵ The 1924 and 1925 Poppy Appeals show that there was more than pride on the line for the city of Belfast. Remembrance Day and the Poppy Appeal became annual litmus tests of Belfast’s loyalty to the United Kingdom, which is why the issue of prestige became so paramount in association with these activities. After surpassing Dublin, the Belfast British Legion used comparisons with other United Kingdom cities as an incentive for Belfast citizens to increase their contributions to the fund. Cities with comparable populations, including Leeds, Bristol, and Edinburgh, raised sums of £4,065, £4,522, and £8,872, respectively, in 1933, to Belfast’s £2,910.

The Legion’s propaganda played up the idea of loyalism to increase the collection, suggesting that Belfast made a significant contribution during the war both at home and on the battlefield, so it was up to the present generation to maintain that type of dedication. This was an attempt to extract contributions from the younger generations because the number of those who, historically, contributed the most to the fund—the

⁷⁴ *Irish Times*, 12 November 1925.

⁷⁵ RBL Belfast, Report submitted to the Area Council at their October meeting by the Area Organising Secretary, 10 November 1925; Minutes of the monthly meeting of the Area Council, 18 November 1925.

“men of the generation of 1914 who were too old to take part in the war”—were dwindling in number.⁷⁶ In order to maintain Belfast’s prestige in the United Kingdom, it became crucial for the contributions of these individuals to be replaced by the current generation.

Despite satisfactory returns, Earl Haig expressed concerns over some of the practices taking place in Belfast’s Poppy Day appeal prior to the commencement of the 1925 drive. Haig reiterated to the people of Belfast that only poppies purchased from the British Legion went to the aid of ex-servicemen. A number of businesses in Belfast sold poppies for purely commercial reasons, and although patrons would have a poppy to wear on Remembrance Day, the money they paid went into the coffers of private businesses and not the British Legion. Wilson echoed Haig’s concerns and insisted that all wreaths laid on the cenotaph be made of official poppies, which were distinguishable by the “Haig’s Fund” logo in the center. Although commercial sale of poppies was legal, Haig and Wilson both urged the people of Belfast to abstain from purchasing non-sanctioned poppies.⁷⁷ This problem continued through the rest of the 1920s and 1930s. In later years, efforts to reduce the number of unofficial poppy sales included “strict” management from the city’s police force.⁷⁸

One of the stark contrasts between Dublin and Belfast in the organization of Poppy Day collections was transportation. In Dublin, the Poppy Day Committee relied on

⁷⁶ *Belfast Newsletter*, 9 November 1934.

⁷⁷ *Belfast Newsletter*, 7 November 1925.

⁷⁸ *Belfast Newsletter*, 8 November 1929.

trucks and vans donated for use by private individuals or businesses. However, in Belfast the local government openly worked with the Appeal making city buses and tramcars available to poppy sellers free of charge.⁷⁹ Assistance from the local government made it easier for poppy sellers to cover more ground and sell more poppies than their peers in Dublin. Use of public transportation no doubt helped a group of three sisters canvas every house in Cultra, a Belfast suburb, in nine hours of collecting for the 1928 for the Poppy Appeal.⁸⁰ The Belfast Appeal in 1937 set a goal of raising £3,000 (deemed attainable because of the increase in employment) and boasted over 1000 collectors throughout the city and suburbs.⁸¹ As the years progressed the differences between Dublin and Belfast Poppy Appeals increased, especially as the authorities in the Free State forced the curtailment of Remembrance Day activities and the Northern Irish government did just the opposite. Yet, despite the challenges placed on the Dublin poppy sellers, the returns continued to be satisfactory through the 1930s, even if they no longer equaled the amount donated in Belfast. In fact, it is likely that the 1924 poppy returns are what fueled heightened local government assistance in the North. Despite very different organizational circumstances and changing attitudes from government officials, donations to the Poppy Appeal demonstrate a consensus of support for the British Legion and Irish ex-servicemen across a number of Irish constituencies, both North and South.

⁷⁹ *Belfast Newsletter*, 10 November 1928.

⁸⁰ *Belfast Newsletter*, 13 November 1928.

⁸¹ *Belfast Newsletter*, 10 November 1937.

Opposition to Remembrance Day and the Poppy Appeal

Despite the solemn nature of Remembrance Day activities, there was a section of the Irish population that took offense to these commemorative events. For the most part, incidents on and around Remembrance Day took place in Dublin. Other Irish cities experienced opposition, too, but not as regularly as Dublin. Whether active or tacit, protestors against Remembrance Day activities focused their ire on the inherently British aspects of the festivities. Throughout the years many republicans asserted that they had no qualms with the ex-servicemen themselves, but rather the militarism and imperialistic displays that accompanied their commemorative exercises. The eleventh of November was commonly called Armistice Day, but this terminology created a number of problems according to members of the British Legion in Ireland. Most Irish people failed to understand fully the meaning of Remembrance Day because of the widespread use of the term Armistice Day, which carried with it a semantic and philosophical difference that many Republicans found threatening because of its direct association with Britain, war, and imperialism. However, the Legion maintained that the term Armistice Day did not accurately describe the nature of activities around the eleventh of November. For the ex-service community, Remembrance Day had little to do with the war itself and more to do with recognizing and remembering the thousands of Irishmen who died in the war.⁸²

Despite pleas for understanding on the part of the Free State populace, notably the Republican element, most years saw some sort of disturbance during Free State ceremonies, although these varied greatly in severity from year-to-year. Tacit opposition and general ambivalence dominated in governmental circles, especially after 1932. This

⁸² *Irish Times*, 13 October 1926.

manifested itself in the ways discussed above and constituted a major impedance to the size and scale of commemorative activities. However, this type of opposition was predictable and non-confrontational, unlike the forms of protest that occurred in the streets. More often than not, the perpetrators of altercations in the streets were young men, and, sometimes, young women. The issue of age should not be overlooked, especially in a country like Ireland where rampant unemployment and poverty persisted. Naturally, political convictions factored into the situation as well, but being young, poor, and unemployed meant that these youths saw Remembrance Day as an opportunity to exercise some of their inherent frustrations toward a group they felt represented the entity to blame for their current situation, the British government. This myopia failed to account for the actual intentions of the British Legion and the short-comings of the Irish Free State, most notably the ultra-nationalistic, and often regressive, economic policies that Eamon de Valera and Fianna Fáil pursued once they came to power in 1932.

More coordinated opposition existed, too, and one of the largest and most organized anti-Remembrance Day groups was the League Against Imperialism. This organization consisted primarily of Republicans congregated in College Green and held rallies near Remembrance Day in opposition to that day's events throughout the 1920s and 1930s. During the 1930 rally, which had an estimated 5,000 attendants—significantly more than the 300-400 attracted just a few years earlier—a broad spectrum of republican speakers addressed the crowd including IRA members, feminists, and Eamon de Valera, himself. Understandably, hostilities tended to break out in the streets between rally-goers and any nearby unionists. Even those simply wearing a poppy could be subject to

excoriation and threats from republicans. Oftentimes these situations required the intervention of the Gardaí to restore the peace, but little serious violence took place. However, the orations and rhetoric dispensed at some of these gatherings would lead one to think that violence was inevitable. At the 1932 meeting Frank Ryan, editor of the republican newspaper *An Phoblacht*, prompted people to use fists, weapons, and any other means necessary to suppress the right to free speech of traitors to Ireland. To further complicate the mix of ideologies flying around at these meetings, many speakers made sure to emphasize that their issue was with the use and display of British symbols to support what the republicans viewed as jingoism. To this point, Ryan encouraged people to tear down any English flag, and if they could not do so, then they should shoot it down. Here a distinct separation exists between violence and agitation targeting individuals, such as ex-servicemen, and targeting British symbols. With Fianna Fáil in power by 1932, the party's presence at these meetings consisted only of the rank-and-file, and no government officials spoke for fear of further alienating the ex-servicemen community, which was significant in size and could be a powerful voting bloc if they chose to be. Peadar O'Donnell, a mainstay presence at these rallies, castigated the Cosgrave government for allowing so many leniencies with the Remembrance Day ceremonies in Dublin in the 1920s, tacitly implying that the restrictions implemented by the Fianna Fáil government were a step in the right direction toward curbing this annual threat to Irish solidarity.⁸³ Although the Free State government was less than thrilled with the annual Remembrance Day activities, it is to their credit that those who perpetrated these incidents against Remembrance Day participants and got caught were brought to

⁸³ Hanley, 5-6; *Irish Times*, 12 November 1926; *Belfast Telegraph*, 11 November 1932.

trial and fined or otherwise punished. Disorder and threats to public safety outweighed the government's opposition to Remembrance Day.

Changing political and military situations throughout Europe in the 1930s made an impact on Remembrance Day events in Dublin. A minority group of ex-servicemen saw the rearmament of Europe as a severe danger and used Remembrance Day as a platform for voicing their views and using their experience in the Great War as a warning against entering another armed conflict. These ex-servicemen, and others, condemned the imperialist sentiment that they saw surrounding these ceremonies, and they also took umbrage with the militaristic impetus that accompanied fascist governments on the continent. Around 1934, fascism and imperialism began to be linked together in the rhetoric of these groups, signaling a shift in Irish thinking that was accomplished to the detriment of the commemorative element of Remembrance Day.⁸⁴

Most of the incidents that occurred during Remembrance Day activities in the streets of Dublin involved poppy snatching, the burning of Union Jacks, and fisticuffs that resulted from this sort of affront. Those who wore their poppies in public ran the risk of having the artificial flower ripped from their lapel, or wherever they chose to display it. One strategy employed by some ex-soldiers to deter the theft of their poppies was to put a razor blade inside of it so that would-be thieves came away with cut up fingers and no poppy.⁸⁵ Episodes like the smoke bomb at the 1925 two minutes silence were few and

⁸⁴ *Irish Press*, 10 November 1934.

⁸⁵ Jane Leonard, "Facing 'the finger of scorn': veterans' memories of Ireland after the Great War," in *War and Memory in the Twentieth Century*, Martin Evans and Ken Lunn, ed., (Oxford and New York, 1997), 66.

far between, although that particular act had the unintentional consequence, in the opinion of Remembrance Day Committee member Mr. S. A. Byers, of helping to further the sale of poppies that year rather than hinder them.⁸⁶ When explosions occurred in Dublin on Remembrance Day oftentimes the target had nothing to do with the day's events and were instead British emblems. For instance, in 1928, statues of Kings William III and George II were targeted with bombs.⁸⁷ Preparations for Remembrance Day in Dublin City included the presence of extra Gardaí, which ensured quick diffusion of most incidents.

Perhaps the effectiveness of the Poppy Appeal influenced Cumann na mBan, an Irish Republican women's organization, to begin systematically selling Easter Lilies in 1926. Lily sales occurred in the spring to coincide with the Easter holiday, but unlike the Poppy Appeal the sale of Easter Lilies fared poorly. One of the biggest obstacles actually came from the government, because the group failed to obtain the proper permits to sell the flowers in the streets of Dublin. The introduction of a floral cultural symbol akin to the poppy not only demonstrated the impact of the poppy on Irish society, but also brought with it a symbol that could be utilized near Remembrance Day to display public opposition to the activities of Irish ex-servicemen.⁸⁸

One of the easiest and most frequent targets for physical altercations was the procession of ex-soldiers and celebrants to and from the Phoenix Park. Numerous reports

⁸⁶ *Irish Times*, 13 November 1925.

⁸⁷ *Irish Times*, 12 November 1928; *Cork Examiner*, 12 November 1928.

⁸⁸ University College, Dublin Archives, P106/1253(1), (13); P106/1259, Handwritten letter [c. 20 March 1937].

exist detailing incidents where hostile individuals or small groups met the processionists, taunting them and trying to steal their flags or poppies. On at least one occasion, flags were taken and thrown into the River Liffey by protesters. Those perpetrating disruptions near large numbers of ex-servicemen typically found themselves at the wrong end of a retributive fist.⁸⁹ In Cork, very little resistance to Remembrance Day existed and the parades, church services, and commemorative ceremonies continued peaceably throughout the 1930s. The *Cork Examiner* only detailed a couple of incidents consisting of an attack on a Poppy depot and a flag being torn down, none of which directly affected or interfered with the Remembrance Day ceremonies in Cork.⁹⁰

Disruptions during Remembrance Day activities were most common in the Free State, notably Dublin, but Northern Irish ceremonies were not immune to similar incidents. Although much more rare during the 1919-1939 time period, the occasional incident did, in fact, occur. In 1933, the IRA in Derry posted notices around the city stating, “Don’t buy poppies. Remember 1916. Issued I.R.A.” These posters were primarily put up in the Nationalist sections of the city, with the notable exception of one such notice on the window of a shop selling poppies and wreaths on one of the main thoroughfares in the city center. The local police and ex-servicemen removed the posters, which numbered about 100.⁹¹ The need to print and distribute these posters, however,

⁸⁹ The following references contain examples of various types of incidents that occurred around Remembrance Day in Dublin: *Irish Times*, 12 November 1926; *Dublin Evening Mail*, 11 November 1925, 11 November 1930; *Belfast Newsletter*, 11 November, 12 November 1926; *Belfast Telegraph*, 11 November 1937.

⁹⁰ *Cork Examiner*, 12 November 1928, 12 November 1930.

⁹¹ *Derry Standard*, 13 November 1933; *Irish Press*, 13 November 1933.

suggests that Derry nationalists supported the poppy appeal and the ex-service community, even if they were not well represented at the city's Remembrance Day activities. Clearly this type of disorder paled in comparison to what was going on in other areas of the island, but for the most part, the IRA, republicans, and nationalists simply abstained from participating in the local Remembrance Day ceremony.

Two separate explosions marred Belfast's two minutes silence in 1938. Both bombs exploded on open land about two miles from the city center. There was little coincidence in the fact that they went off within twenty seconds of each other during the two minutes silence and could be clearly heard in the city center. Initially, the people gathered in the city center for the Remembrance Day services thought that the first bomb was a signal to commence the two minutes silence, but when it was closely followed by another explosion it became clear that something was amiss. Police inquiries turned up little information and no persons were reported near the scene of each bomb so they cannot be positively attributed to any Nationalist groups or the IRA, but it would be no surprise if one of those ranks were responsible.⁹²



Remembrance Day and the Poppy Appeal constituted two of the most public and ritualistic aspects of Great War commemoration in Ireland during the inter-war period. Members of the ex-service community across the island showed a great deal of support for these activities. In doing so, they developed and codified an aspect of popular culture that was outside the republican nationalist milieu yet retained local nuances and catered

⁹² *Belfast Newsletter*, 12 November 1938.

to local populations in ways that enabled them to make sense of the war and its consequences. The poppy emerged as the most recognizable symbol of Great War remembrance and sales of the scarlet flower for the annual Poppy Appeal were strong in Ireland for most of the inter-war period. Because the culture of commemoration of the Great War was so popular and successful in Ireland, it generated its share of opposition, too. Republicans and nationalists in the south saw the ex-servicemen's commemorative activities as politically charged events that challenged their concept of Irish national identity. In other European countries the "cult of the war dead was linked to the self-representation of the nation" so the stability and structure surrounding Great War commemorative rituals stood in stark contrast to the memory of the Independence movement, which remained piecemeal and fractured for most of this period as a result of the Irish Civil War.⁹³ Once Eamon de Valera and Fianna Fáil came to power in 1932, this situation started to change and Remembrance Day in the Free State began a slow decline that would accelerate after the Second World War as the cult of the Republican war dead gained prominence within the social, cultural, and political milieu of Irish society in the Free State. Many in the ex-service community, especially the British Legion, recognized the about-face much of Irish society experienced after 1916, when support shifted away from Irish soldiers in the British army to the Easter Rising's republican martyrs and their followers. Remembrance Day events in Dublin suffered the most under the Free State government, but the Legion possessed few options other than to succumb to the demands of the government if they wished to continue to stage their commemorative rituals.

⁹³ George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 105.

Meanwhile, local communities in the North, bolstered by the local government, remained committed to commemorating their losses from the First World War. In both areas the rituals developed during this period set the pattern for public remembrance of the war in Ireland into the next century.

CHAPTER TWO

BUILDING AN IRISH IDENTITY: GREAT WAR MEMORIALS IN IRELAND, 1919-1939

The death and destruction of the Great War left many European communities searching for a way to understand the ordeal they had experienced. Communities had any number of ways to express their common interest in remembering the First World War, and one of the most popular forms during the inter-war period was the erection of public war memorials. Public monuments in general serve several purposes. They link individuals to groups of like-minded people and in the process help to define the history and current composition of a particular group, as well as suggesting future aspirations and an appropriate path for reaching those goals. Therefore, as historian Gerald Danzer suggests, public monuments have both “a horizontal and a vertical dimension.” They function horizontally by bringing people together, transcending class, religious, political, or other social divisors, at a particular point in time. The permanence of public monuments ensures the continuation of their horizontal function across multiple generations, thus ensuring a vertical connection between the past and the present.¹

Choosing the design of a war memorial proved to be a challenge for planning committees, who had to decide what form their memorial would take, monumental or utilitarian. Both forms had their merits and served different functional purposes.

¹ Gerald A. Danzer, *Public Places: Exploring Their History* (Nashville, TN: The American Association for State and Local History, 1987), 1.

Monumental memorials mainly held symbolic meaning within their communities, but served no quotidian purpose. Nevertheless, monumental memorials were the most common form of war memorial, and were well suited for the type of commemorative activities that emerged for remembering the Great War. Utilitarian memorials generally served a practical purpose, and could take the form of a library, a hall, a park, a community center, a hospital, or a performing arts center. Utilitarian memorials tended to be more future minded with the goal of enriching the lives of younger generations while still preserving the memory of the past. Some memorials combined utilitarian and monumental forms, but there were few of these in Ireland.² The popularity of monumental war memorials in Ireland suggests a lasting connection to pre-war commemorative patterns when memorials commonly celebrated the honor and glory achieved during armed combat. In southern Ireland, the choice of monumental Great War memorials comes as little surprise, despite the unprecedented destruction caused by that war, perhaps, because they could compete with republican nationalist memorials that stressed the verity and virtue of the Easter Rising and Anglo-Irish war.

War memorials served as a place for collective and individual grieving. Even though Great War memorials were designed as loci of mourning, most of these memorials in Ireland carried with them political overtones that members of Irish society outside of the ex-service community had trouble divorcing from the cathartic properties of the memorials. So while war memorials provided a framework for, and legitimized individual and collective grief (especially given the British army's decision not to

² Catherine Switzer, *Unionists and Great War Commemoration in the North of Ireland 1914-1918* (Dublin and Portland, OR: Irish Academic Press, 2007), 57.

repatriate the bodies of the war dead), the natural decline of the population of the ex-service community and the growing apathy toward that sub-community throughout the south meant that overtime the external perception of these memorials focused increasingly on their political subtext.³

After the First World War, war memorials quickly became a part of the public landscape in Ireland, occupying both secular and sacred spaces. Although ex-servicemen's organizations and other groups commissioning war memorials were not necessarily political entities, those memorials located in public places, such as town centers, often retained political overtones associating a particular Irish identity with Ireland's ex-service community. In the south, this Irish identity employed elements of Redmondite constitutional nationalism, supporting Irish independence while at the same time accepting Ireland's relationship with Great Britain. While this strand of Irish identity was not new, its status within Irish society drastically changed in the inter-war period, a time when independence and the existence of competing definitions of what it meant to be Irish produced a significant degree of malleability in the creating of a national Irish identity. Constitutional nationalism lost the momentum it had generated in the years prior to the outbreak of the First World War. However, its remaining supporters possessed a number of themes and ideas they could use in order to adapt their concept of Irishness to post-war Ireland. In the North the First World War helped to advance nascent Ulster Unionist identity. This Northern Irish identity differed from those in the south by playing

³ Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 79, 93; Catherine Moriarty, "Private Grief and Public Remembrance: British First World War Memorials," in *War and Memory in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Martin Evans and Ken Lunn (Oxford and New York, 1997): 125-142.

up religious and political differences, and by casting the North's involvement in the war as a blood sacrifice undertaken for Britain's benefit. The 36th (Ulster) Division's losses at the Somme took on mythic status alongside the Battle of the Boyne as examples of Ulster's commitment to Great Britain.

The public nature of many of these war memorials meant they became sites of contested memory, as the multiple definitions of Irish identity they represented challenged the emerging, dominant Irish identity based on republican nationalist ideals and history. That the republican nationalist brand of Irish identity eventually became the norm in Ireland is undisputed, however, the memory of the First World War demonstrates that this was not always inevitable and the memorials to that conflict gave alternative forms of Irish identity public space, and helped to foster a national imagined community derived from Ireland's ex-servicemen and their supporters and sympathizers. This Chapter examines monuments commemorating Ireland's Great War dead in different domestic and international locations in an effort to flesh out the scope and breadth of the forms of Irish identity associated with them. In doing so, this chapter considers the factors that went into constructing and dedicating memorials in Dublin, Cork, Derry, and Belfast. Despite the in-roads made by the ex-service community toward redefining Irish identity, this process met resistance from the Free State government. A new Irish constitution in 1937, the outbreak of the Second World War, and the Free State's neutrality in that conflict signaled the beginning of the end for competing Irish identities in the south, a break that was finalized with the establishment of the Republic in 1947.

War memorials constitute one of the most common ways that groups choose to commemorate their war dead and this holds true in the context of Ireland and the First World War. In Ireland, as in many European countries, commemorative rituals centered around war memorials evolved to instruct the living. That ritualized component of vernacular memory, however, stands as one of several components that went into developing an Irish identity that incorporated the Great War. Understanding the process through which these memorials came into existence provides important information about the intentions behind Great War memory in Ireland and the interaction between official and vernacular memory. The individuals who sat on planning committees and the artists and architects who designed war memorials attempted to shape the public perception of the war and its relationship to the Irish national project.

The sheer number of Irish men who died in the war ensured that Great War memorials would pop up all over the island of Ireland. Even today, almost a century later, memorials to the Great War dead far out number memorials to the dead of any other Irish military conflict, including those commemorating the nationalist and republican dead of the Anglo-Irish and Irish Civil wars.⁴ In addition to the numerous domestic war memorials, a number of memorials to the Irish divisions of the First World War exist on the continent and in the Mediterranean battle zones where Irish troops were stationed; a few memorials also exist to honor select collections of Irish troops below the divisional

⁴ One of the best resources for locating war memorials is the website <http://www.irishwarmemorials.ie>. This site allows users to search its database of war memorials by regiment, war, and location. It should also be noted that many memorials to the Second World War consist of additions to those already erected to the dead of the First World War, and there are relatively few memorials dedicated specifically to the Second World War dead in Ireland.

level. War memorials played a critical role as the focal point in local Remembrance Day ceremonies (see chapter 1), and served as a daily reminder of the sacrifices made in the war during the rest of the year.

The construction of war memorials in Northern Ireland fell in line with trends in other combatant countries. Local officials took the lead on these projects and dealt with artistic, political, and financial issues. Free State war memorials broke away from this in one significant way; private citizens initiated almost everything. Nevertheless, the same problems that faced the building of local war memorials in Britain, France, and Germany existed in Ireland. Plans often required modification to meet financial limits and construction delays were common. While some localities completed their memorials almost immediately after the war, it was not uncommon across Europe for memorials to be unveiled much later.⁵

Many steps went into erecting a war memorial. Most memorials in Ireland were commissioned by private organizations and the money was raised by subscription. Unfortunately, few of these groups left behind any records detailing the successes and difficulties related to the building of war memorials. However, it is worth pointing out that local war memorials sprang up all across Ireland, north and south. Typically, the organizing groups appointed a committee to come up with suggestions for the form the memorial would take or to solicit ideas from designers, oversee the solicitation and collection of subscriptions, settle on a design and artist, and arrange the dedication ceremony. With so many steps involved it comes as little surprise that differences of opinion often arose over the location or form of the memorial, and that subscriptions

⁵ Winter, 89.

often lagged behind established targets. As a result, the time it took to build local war memorials dramatically increased. Usually, the memorials that went up the quickest were those in churches. Church memorials commemorated the individuals from specific congregations who died in the war and tended to be housed in the church itself. These trends held true for memorial construction in Northern Ireland and the Free State.

In the Free State, war memorials were most common in provincial centers. Since rural Ireland was less densely populated than urban centers like Dublin or Belfast, it was common for ex-servicemen to travel to the nearest town to take part in Remembrance Day activities. In effect, this meant that fewer war memorials existed in the Free State, but each one served a large population. Along with Dublin and Cork, the two largest cities in the Free State, war memorials were erected in cities such as Cahir, Limerick, and Drogheda.

Dublin

Numerous local war memorials were erected and dedicated in Dublin after the war, mostly by churches. Discussions regarding the erection of a public memorial started to pick up steam immediately after the declaration of the armistice and although many people subscribed to the yet-to-be-determined war memorial fund it would be a long time before there was anything to show for their efforts. Planners intended Dublin's war memorial to serve the entire island, commemorating all of the Irish war dead including those from the north. Much has been written about the planning and the construction of the Irish National War Memorial and instead of revisiting the details of the memorial the present work provides a brief outline of the project and the problems it faced in order to

demonstrate the effect the memorial had on the landscape of Great War memory in Ireland.⁶

The Irish National War Memorial Committee was the group responsible for overseeing the commissioning and construction of a national Irish war memorial slated for Dublin. The group was born out of a general meeting at the Vice-Regal lodge in Dublin's Phoenix Park on 17 July 1919. Over one hundred people from across Ireland attended the meeting with the hope of setting down a plan for a permanent memorial to Ireland's war dead, including the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, John French, Earl of Ypres, General Sir William Hickie, and the Lord Mayor of Belfast. An eight person committee emerged from the meeting headed by Sir Dunbar Plunket Barton, a Unionist lawyer, General Hickie, Senator Andrew Jameson, Mr. Justice Hanna, Lady Arnott, and Vivian Brew-Mulhallen.⁷ The committee immediately established a fund for the memorial and began collecting subscriptions. Calls went out for subscriptions and before long a sum of £50,000 had been contributed for the yet-to-be-decided-upon war memorial, including a £1,000 donation from the Guinness Brewery.⁸

The members of the committee represented Ireland's Anglo-Irish professional and political elite, including constitutional nationalists and Unionists. Despite widening political fissures in Ireland since the summer of 1914, such an assortment of planners

⁶ Fergus A. D'Arcy, *Remembering the War Dead: British Commonwealth and International War Graves in Ireland Since 1914* (Dublin: Stationery Office, 2007); Keith Jeffery, *Ireland and the Great War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Jane Leonard, "Lest we forget," in David Fitzpatrick, ed., *Ireland and the First World War* (Dublin: Trinity History Workshop, 1986), 59-67.

⁷ D'Arcy, 172.

⁸ *Irish Times*, 9 August 1919.

suggests a degree of consensus on what constituted Irish identity. While Unionists and constitutional nationalists had different political goals, both political viewpoints recognized the influence of British culture and traditions in Ireland and since Ireland had yet to achieve independence, they viewed the First World War as a conflict in which the Irish played an important and justifiable role.

Much deliberating went into deciding what form that the Irish National War Memorial would take. Lord French's original plan was to erect a permanent Soldiers Club in Dublin, but with the Anglo-Irish War and the withdrawal of British Troops from Ireland, this idea ceased to remain a viable option.⁹ Organizers then opted for a monumental, rather than utilitarian memorial and planned to put it in Merrion Square in the heart of Dublin's city center. Ongoing armed conflict in Ireland helped table the issue of the war memorial for several years, although in the meantime the Irish National War Memorial (INWM) Committee oversaw the compilation and publication of *Ireland's Memorial Records*, an eight-volume list of the Irish men who died in the Great War. This project cost some £5,000 and involved some of the most renowned artists contributing artwork, including Harry Clarke who designed the title page and page borders used throughout the work.¹⁰ Although the INWM Committee approved a plan for building a memorial in Merrion Square in 1924, the members of the Dáil did not share their enthusiasm for the project and rejected the plan in 1926. The British Legion had their

⁹ The National Archive, Kew (Hereafter TNA), War Office 32/5895, Letter from Hickie to Under Secretary of State, War Office, 12 December 1924.

¹⁰ Keith Jeffery, *Ireland and the Great War*, 111. See the Introduction for a discussion of some of the methodological problems associated with the compilation of *Ireland's Memorial Records*.

own concerns with the plan, given the size of the Remembrance Day commemoration in St. Stephen's Green in 1925 and the logistical nightmare of having so many people crammed into such a small area.¹¹

Unsurprisingly, the Irish National War Memorial had its fair share of critics. As the years passed and there remained no memorial, voices from the general public emerged to suggest an alternative use of the monies collected for the project. Many Irish ex-servicemen lived in dire conditions and relied heavily on benevolent organizations for survival. Therefore, the suggestion was made to put the INWM funds towards relief for destitute ex-servicemen. Another member of the public wrote to the editor of the *Irish Times* suggesting the funds either be put towards a housing scheme for disabled veterans or a concert hall in the Dublin city center, which would contain memorials to the men who died and provide a meeting place for the ex-service community on Remembrance Day. During the rest of the year the room could be rented out and the money raised put towards benevolent work for ex-servicemen. James Henry Webb, a Dublin resident, essentially suggested building a community center in Dublin in lieu of a monumental memorial.¹² Moreover, James Ashe suggested that for the memorial to be considered truly national in scope, the committee needed to include representatives from Northern Ireland in the planning and decision-making process.¹³ Finally, in 1931 the Cork Branch of the British Legion went so far as to issue a statement explicitly stating their belief that the

¹¹ *Irish Times*, 1 April 1924; D'Arcy, 175-176.

¹² *Irish Times*, 3 May 1926, 10 April 1930. See also, *Irish Independent*, 13 March 1930.

¹³ *Irish Independent*, 7 April 1930.

“time for memorials had now past” and, given the current economic crisis, the money would be better spent on building more houses for ex-servicemen.¹⁴ However, none of these, or any other, alternative suggestions for use of the INWM funds were pursued. Legal obstacles prevented any serious consideration of these ideas, as the Law Courts had determined that because the money was collected with the understanding that it would be used to construct a war memorial that was how the money must be spent.¹⁵

Forced to find another location for the project after the rejection of the Merrion Square plan, the INWM Committee decided on a section of land to the west of the city center on the immediate outskirts of Dublin, close to the Phoenix Park. This area, known as Islandbridge, was close enough to the city to serve Dublin’s ex-service community, but far enough removed from the city center not to cause disturbances downtown. This location also meant that most of the people who visited the memorial made a special effort to do so. While a memorial in downtown Dublin would be immediately recognizable and accessible to everyone, it would also antagonize Republicans who feared that a memorial to Ireland’s Great War dead in the heart of the city center would carry an erroneous message about the country’s origins. Of the Merrion Square proposal, Minister of Justice and Vice-President of the Executive Council, Kevin O’Higgins stated that for such a memorial to be erected across the street from the houses of government would suggest that the Irish nation was founded on sacrifices made in the First World

¹⁴ *Irish Independent*, 20 October 1931.

¹⁵ *Irish Times*, 5 March 1927.

War and not the Easter Rising.¹⁶ Nevertheless, while impressive war memorials would be constructed in Belfast and Derry in Northern Ireland, there seemed little objection to designating the Dublin memorial scheme as the National War Memorial. In fact, the subscriptions for the war memorial came from all over Ireland and the executive council of the Northern Ireland Area of the British Legion maintained a correspondence with the members of the war memorial committee and, generally, took great interest in the progress made toward the commencement, and the completion of construction on the memorial.¹⁷ However, members from the Northern Ireland Area of the British Legion did voice at least one concern over the memorial's design claiming that a park layout forced the project to the outskirts of the city, which was unbecoming the sacrifice the memorial represented. The Southern Ireland Area shared some of these concerns, but despite the Legion's clout with the ex-service community there was little they could do to alter the Islandbridge plan.¹⁸ Finally, the Free State government backed the Islandbridge plan, going so far as to appropriate significant funds toward construction costs. President Cosgrave argued that since over 200,000 Irish men fought in the war and over 100,000 people were attending Remembrance Day services in Dublin each year, a project of this

¹⁶ Ireland, Dáil, *Debates*, Vol. 19, 29 March 1927, col. 400-402; *Irish Times*, 30 March 1927.

It is worth noting that O'Higgins was careful not to disrespect the actual sacrifices made by those who died in the First World War, as he had two brothers who served, one of whom died, but his objection was to the location of the Merrion Square memorial and the meaning it would project.

¹⁷ Royal British Legion, Belfast, Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of the Area Council, 1 November 1929, 6 December 1929.

¹⁸ *Irish Times*, 11 February 1932; *Irish Independent*, 8 February 1932.

size and magnitude should receive financial assistance to ensure its success because it was important to so many people in the country.¹⁹

Design of the Irish National War memorial was awarded to Sir Edwin Luytens, a famous British architect, who designed the cenotaph at Whitehall in London and the Somme Memorial at Thiepval, France. Of course the choice of an Englishman to design an Irish war memorial bolstered the claims of Republicans that the entire exercise was one of imperialist interest. Nevertheless, construction on the Islandbridge site commenced in 1931. Most of the labor force consisted of ex-servicemen from both the British and Irish armies, but there were disagreements as to whom, exactly, would get preference. President Cosgrave stated that there would be an even split, with half of the jobs going to men from each army so that by January 1932 a total of 164 men were employed under these guidelines.²⁰

For those who found employment on the park, the project provided steady work for a number of years. The project consisted of more than a single cenotaph or plaque. The Islandbridge memorial resolved the issue of having a functional memorial versus an ornamental one by creating both within the milieu of a single entity. On the one hand, Islandbridge took up several acres of land and the tree-lined paths and stretches of green grass served as a park for use by the general public. Within the park, the area where Remembrance Day ceremonies were held consisted of a wide expanse of green grass. In the center of the field was a large rectangular Remembrance Stone, bearing the inscription: "Their name liveth for evermore." Facing south, behind the Remembrance

¹⁹ D'Arcy, 178-179.

²⁰ D'Arcy, 180.

Stone, a series of steps leads up to the Cross of Sacrifice. Behind the Cross, the steps continue up the hillside, and on each side of the stairs are carved gold-lettered inscriptions, written in Irish on the east wall and English on the west, that reads “To the memory of 49,400 Irish men who gave their lives in the Great War 1914-1918.” The Remembrance Stone and Cross of Sacrifice sit in the middle of the main area and the remaining features of the park mirror each other in regard to the north/south axis created by these two landmarks. Two identical fountains flank the Remembrance Stone, and the main field and ceremonial approaches are separated from a sunken garden on each side by two gatehouses with a colonnade connecting them. Taken as a whole, the park setting exuded a calm, beauty, and serenity that directly countered the experience of life in the trenches on the western front and the other theaters of battle in the Great War.

Construction on the Islandbridge site endured several work stoppages, usually due to lack of capital, before its completion in 1937. Although the British Legion originally sought to have their Remembrance Day ceremony that year at the new park, they changed their minds and requested use of the Phoenix Park for fear that a ceremony at Islandbridge might damage the newly planted trees and shrubs.²¹ Nineteen thirty-eight, however, was the first year that Dublin’s Remembrance Day ceremony moved from the Phoenix Park to the Irish National War Memorial, and remained there ever since. Numerous delays and disagreements over the form of a dedication ceremony with the de Valera government coupled with the outbreak of the Second World War, however, meant that the park was never officially opened. Although it was placed under the care of the

²¹ D’Arcy, 187-188.

Office of Public Works, the Irish National War Memorial was allowed to fall into a state of disrepair for a significant portion of the twentieth century.



Figure 1: *The Stone of Remembrance and Cross at the Irish National War Memorial, Dublin.*



Figure 2: *One of two sunken gardens at the Irish National War Memorial, Dublin located at the east and west ends of the main park.*

Cork

Dublin, as the capital of the Free State and home to the National War Memorial, is somewhat of an anomaly in the discussion of local war memorials in the Free State

because the city's size in terms of population and its status as the center of the Free State government created a significant amount of tension there that was not as strong elsewhere. Cork City, on the other hand, possessed a public memorial in the city center and numerous private organizations maintained their own war memorials as well. Multiple ex-service organizations in Cork undoubtedly contributed to the lack of a single, unified commemorative exercise prior to 1925 when the British Legion absorbed the League of Irish Ex-servicemen. Further exacerbating this situation was the absence of a city war memorial. On St. Patrick's Day, 1925, this situation was rectified when the Cork City war memorial was unveiled and dedicated. Located on the South Mall just east of Grand Parade in the heart of Cork City, the memorial was commissioned by subscriptions under the auspices of the Cork Independent Ex-Servicemen's Club. The memorial consisted of a square obelisk mounted on a square plinth and the names of the war dead totaling 147 were inscribed around all four sides of the base; the names were originally arranged alphabetically by surname and included each soldier's service number, rank, and regiment. Across the front of the plinth read the words "Lest We Forget." On the north face of the obelisk stood a relief of a soldier standing under a wreath with head bowed, arms reversed, and the muzzle of his rifle pointed toward the ground. This depiction of a soldier—contemplative, mournful, introspective, disengaged militarily—accurately represented the attitude of the Cork ex-servicemen toward their service in the Great War. There is little to suggest that the ex-service community in Cork had any intention other than remembering and commemorating their fallen comrades. In this regard, the instructional purpose of the Cork war memorial served as a reminder of the

sacrifice and loss associated with war. Although recognized as the war memorial for Cork City, the city government had little to do with the project. Members of the city corporation sympathetic to the ex-service community, such as John Horgan, who supported the memorial proposal undoubtedly aided with the procurement of the memorial site in the city center. While approval of the memorial was critical to the completion of the memorial there is no evidence of additional aid from the city corporation. A general lack of official intervention or assistance highlights the vernacular nature of war commemoration in Cork. The ability of the ex-servicemen's groups to acquire the requisite subscriptions for the memorial and taking responsibility for maintaining the site supports this argument as well.

A significant amount of planning and effort went into the unveiling ceremony for the Cork war memorial. Beginning at 11am, the Cork branch of the British Legion and the Cork Independent Ex-Servicemen's Club met up and, led by General Harrison, a former commanding officer of the Royal Munster Fusiliers' Depot and distinguished guest for the day's ceremonies, marched to St. Mary's Cathedral. Here both Catholic and Protestant ex-servicemen attended High Mass, celebrated by Dr. Daniel Cohalan, Bishop of Cork, after which they reformed their procession and returned to the South Mall for the unveiling ceremony, which commenced at about 2:15pm.

The speeches made during the dedication ceremony reflected the political ideals of Cork's ex-service community. General Harrison spoke to the gathered audience about the sacrifices made by the Corkmen to whom the memorial was dedicated. Furthermore, he used the occasion as an opportunity to implore the Irish government to provide any aid

to the “poor and hungry” families of the deceased. Harrison’s comments implicitly indicted the Irish government’s laissez-faire attitude toward the ex-service community and reveal a very real lacuna between the two. Once Harrison finished his address he removed the Union Jack covering the memorial. Such a public and prominent use of the Union Jack further solidifies the political proclivities of the Cork ex-service community, and is especially notable in Cork, where republican violence against loyalists and ex-servicemen was greatest during the Anglo-Irish war. At the same time, the use of British iconography and the size of the attendance at the dedication demonstrated the strength of both the Cork ex-service community and their political and social identity as something distinctly different from republican nationalism.

The speakers who followed Harrison at the dedication continued on a similar political trajectory. Michael Egan, a member of Cumann na nGaedhael, which was the political party in power at the time, and a representative of Cork in the Dáil, spoke next at the ceremony. Egan considered it a privilege to be associated with the day’s events honoring “the men who went out and fought and died so that their fellow countrymen and women could live in peace.” Furthermore, Egan commented on the appropriateness of the memorial’s inscription “Lest we forget” because it reminded everyone of the men who died for “the small nations of the world.” By emphasizing the fight for small nations, Egan referenced Redmonite nationalism and validated the ideals that motivated many Irishmen to enlist in the British Army during the war as relevant in contemporary Ireland. Egan also took up the call made by General Harrison for government support of the ex-service community, pledging to do whatever he could to help the ex-service community.

John Horgan, who was elected to the Dáil in 1927 as a member of the National League, an Irish political party that advocated for closer ties with Britain, was also given the opportunity to address the crowd. Horgan stated his opinion that the men who fought in the First World War “did as much as any people in Ireland in order that the people of the country might be free” and that “[t]hey had contributed very largely to the measure of freedom that their country had obtained.” He, too, referenced Redmondite constitutional nationalism in discussing the rights of small nations, and acknowledged the sacrifices that the men of Cork made to ensure those rights. In essence, Horgan’s comments sought to confirm the belief within the ex-service community that their sacrifice was a valid aspect of Ireland’s struggle for independence. Following the speeches, wreaths were laid on the monument and the ex-servicemen marched past it with General Harrison taking the salute.²² By the end of the day the city of Cork possessed a pivot around which future commemorative activities revolved.

The decision to dedicate the memorial on St. Patrick’s Day carries with it an interesting connotation. On this occasion St. Patrick became a contested icon of Irish identity. As the patron saint of Ireland he takes on a nationalist association, especially after the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922. Rev. Dr. James Scannell “congratulated” the war memorial committee on choosing the Feast of St. Patrick as the day for unveiling the memorial, stating, “it was a fitting day for such a ceremony.”²³ Further to this point, Scannell’s statement stands as strategically vague in which group or

²² *Cork Examiner*, 18 March 1925; *Irish Times*, 18 March 1925.

²³ *Cork Examiner*, 18 March 1925.

groups should be associated with St. Patrick's Day, and, implicitly the Irish nation. By leaving his interpretation open, Scannell's rhetoric suggests that a place exists for all political and religious affiliations, republican, constitutional nationalist, loyalist, Protestant, or Catholic in contemporary definitions of Irishness. Scannell's own experience suggests that Irish identity could transcend political differences. As a Catholic priest he served as chaplain for the Irish Guards during the First World War and later as chaplain for the Provisional Government Troops at Collins Barracks, Cork during the Irish Civil War.²⁴ Although the war memorial itself conjured images of Ireland's imperial past as a member of the United Kingdom, members of Cork's ex-service community did not necessarily have to identify their sense of being Irish with the state's former political association with Britain. Much more prominently, the Cork ceremony and memorial defined Ireland's role in the First World War as part of Ireland's patriotic struggle for independence along Parliamentary Party lines. By dedicating the memorial on St. Patrick's Day, the Cork ex-service community proactively contested the Republican version of public memory.

While the presence of a public memorial to the Great War bolstered the general commemorative landscape of Cork City, private organizations commissioned and maintained their own memorials. Private memorials contributed to the vernacular culture and memory of the Great War in Cork. Church memorials tended to be cared for the best, and both the Catholic Cathedral and Anglican St. Finbarr's possessed war memorials in Cork. At the former, a simple triptych lists the names of those from the congregation who

²⁴ Catholic Diocese Of Cork And Ross, Ireland, "News, History, Mass Times || Parishes, Churches, Offices," <http://www.corkandross.org/priests.jsp?priestID=796>.

died in the war while St. Finbarr's housed several memorials. The primary memorial took the form of a roll of honor and provides the names of those who died, a list engraved on eight panels that covered most of a wall. Individual families also put up memorials in St. Finbarr's in the memory of relatives or loved ones lost in the war.²⁵ Memorials associated with religious groups were not limited to the largest Catholic and Protestant churches in Cork. On Remembrance Day in 1925, the Church of Ireland Young Men's Association in Cork opened a memorial room and unveiled a commemorative tablet in the organization's Great Hall. The tablet included the names of the war dead from the Association, and local dignitaries, representatives of the British Legion and the predominantly Catholic Independent Ex-Servicemen's Association, ex-soldiers, and the relatives of the deceased all attended the unveiling ceremony.²⁶

The decision to dedicate a room in the building to the memory of the war dead speaks to one of the central issues faced by the committees that drew up plans for war memorials: would the memorial be functional or ornamental. Both memorial forms had their advantages to the planning committees and the communities they served. Ornamental memorials, like the tablet at the Young Men's Association or the city's war memorial, were static entities that instructed and informed contemporaries about the past. Functional memorials, such as a meeting room, library, or hospital beds, for example, often lacked the permanence of brick-and-mortar memorials because they could become outdated, or the organization that commissioned the memorial could cease to exist, thus submitting the memorial to the likelihood of being forgotten or destroyed.

²⁵ For a list of memorials and pictures, see <http://www.irishwarmemorials.ie>.

²⁶ *Cork Examiner*, 12 November 1925.



Figure 3: *The Cork City War Memorial*

Derry

Construction of Derry City's war memorial was a major undertaking, especially in contrast to the same project in Cork. First of all, a committee within the administration of the city's government oversaw the planning and construction of the war memorial. Immediately, this fact signifies a shift away from the vernacular culture of memory so prominent in the south to an official memory of the war in the north. One of the consequences of local government involvement was that the size and scope of the Derry memorial was much larger than the one in Cork. Even though the Cork memorial was unveiled two years sooner than its Derry counterpart, the cost and the scale of the Derry memorial was far greater. This made the Derry memorial more prone to delays and required more time to get everything in order.

Shortly after the cessation of hostilities on the continent the mayor of Derry called a meeting to discuss the prospect of building a memorial to honor Derry's war dead. Early on the committee members decided that the city's war memorial should include the names of all the men from Derry who died in the war, that "it should be something in the nature of a perpetual memorial to the men whose names ought to be held in everlasting remembrance," and that the memorial would be a finished product that would not require an endowment for on-going maintenance. The cost for such a project was estimated to be between £4,000-£5,000, and the committee wasted little time calling upon the public for subscriptions. Most of the necessary money was quickly raised, but it would be a number of years before the project was completed.²⁷ At a meeting of subscribers around June 1923, those in attendance decided to delay putting up the memorial in Derry because "owing to the disturbed state of the country they would not risk erecting a Memorial which might be blown to pieces at any moment."²⁸ Although Republican activity in Derry was infrequent, especially compared to Cork, where the most incidents occurred, Derry official's hesitation to immediately commence construction of their war memorial serves as testimony to the contested nature of Great War memory in post-WWI Ireland.²⁹

As the years passed without a local war memorial in Derry members of the ex-service community there became upset by the lack of visible progress. One Derry resident voiced his displeasure of the situation to the editors of the *Londonderry Sentinel*, stating

²⁷ Diamond War Memorial Project, Memorial History, <http://www.diamondwarmemorial.com/pages/history>.

²⁸ Harbour Museum, Derry, MSS 3, Folder 5-12, Letter from Anderson to Moore, 2 June 1923.

²⁹ Joost Augusteijn, "Radical Nationalist Activities in County Derry, 1900-1921," in *Derry and Londonderry: History & Society*, Gerard O'Brien, ed. (Dublin: Geography Publications, 1999): 573-599.

“As a native of the old, historic city of Derry I feel greatly grieved to see her so far behind as regards our long-talked-of war memorial. Other cities have their memorials, and what is delaying Derry’s memorial! I hope some abler pen than mine will take this matter up, and not allow another year to pass without a service round our memorial, where all who took part in the great struggle to free Europe could gather and pay respect to the memory of our gallant dead.”³⁰ At a meeting of the Londonderry branch of the British Legion in 1924, Mr. William Downs voiced similar concerns, noting that most towns in England, Scotland, and Ireland had war memorials, but nothing had been done in Derry. To this, Captain Julian T. E. Miller informed the branch of the progress made hitherto on the city memorial. The war memorial committee had already begun to receive subscriptions for the project, but the trustees had not yet decided on a design. However, Miller reiterated the fact that there was a consensus agreement that the memorial would bear the names of all the fallen. Because the war memorial remained in the planning stages, the organizing secretary of the Belfast Branch, who chaired the meeting, suggested that the memorial should take the form of something useful to the living, such as a great hall to house their legion club and other activities.³¹ These sentiments reinforce the fact that the decision to construct a utilitarian versus an ornamental war memorial occurred throughout the island, and also illustrates that a similar thread of thought existed in Ireland as to how the memory of the dead could serve the needs of the living.

³⁰ *Londonderry Sentinel*, 11 November 1924.

³¹ *Londonderry Sentinel*, 4 March 1922.

While public pressure pushed for a finished product, the war memorial committee appealed to the public to submit the names of any relatives who died in the war in November 1924.³² Special forms were drawn up and sent out to the families of Derry's ex-servicemen. Once the Committee received the completed forms they set to the task of deciding which names to include on the memorial. These forms solicited basic information about each applicant—name, rank, regiment and regimental number—as well as more specific information, such as any military honors granted, the date and nature of death, the deceased's place of birth, and, if not originally from Londonderry, the deceased's connection to the city. There was also a section for applicants to write in any other pertinent information that would help to make the case to have their loved one's name included on the memorial. The Committee kept the requirements for inclusion pretty tight. A hard cutoff date for inclusion was set at 31 December 1919 and those who died after that date as a result of their military service were automatically excluded. Any person who was not born in, or a long-time resident of Derry, as well as those who had not made their living in the city was generally excluded as well.³³ In total, the Committee approved 756 names to be included on the city war memorial, and all of the forms were bound in a four-volume set further documenting Derry's contribution to the war.³⁴ Compiling the names proved to be a laborious and drawn out task, one that significantly delayed the unveiling of the memorial. Vernon March, an English sculptor in Kent was

³² *Londonderry Sentinel*, 11 November 1924.

³³ Harbour Museum, Derry, MSS 3, Folder 5-12, Letter to The City of Derry War Memorial Committee, 29 October 1926.

³⁴ This four-volume set of the original applications is housed at the Harbour Museum in Derry City.

selected to build the memorial in 1925 for a cost of £5,000.³⁵ Originally, the plan was to have everything ready for unveiling on Remembrance Day in 1926, but the names were not ready in time, delaying March's progress.³⁶ Recent work has found an even representation of Catholics and Protestant among the 756 names listed on the memorial.³⁷ By June of 1927, the Derry war memorial was ready for unveiling and dedication.

Unveiling took place on Thursday, 23 June 1927, with a reception to follow at the Melville Hotel for invited guests.³⁸ Prior to the unveiling ceremony the British Legion and 1st Battalion Sherwood Foresters bands treated those in attendance to numerous musical selections. Major-General F. F. Ready, the General Officer Commanding the Northern Ireland District, accepted an invitation to unveil and dedicate the city war memorial. Beginning at 12:30pm sharp the bands accompanied the choir in attendance as they sang a processional. Lady Anderson replaced her husband Sir Robert Anderson, who was ill and the chair of the War Memorial Committee, as ceremony officiant. She addressed the crowd and praised the dedication and honor of the soldiers and citizens of Derry for their sacrifices during the war before turning the proceedings over to Major-General Ready. Ready spoke of the honor for being chosen to unveil the war memorial in Derry because the city's "history is an example to the whole Empire for its loyalty and devotion to the crown." Speaking of the fallen Ready said that the two strongest emotions

³⁵ Harbour Museum, Derry, MSS 3, Agreement between The City of Derry War Memorial Committee and Vernon March, c. April 1925.

³⁶ Harbour Museum, Derry, MSS 3, Letter to Captain Wilton, 23 February 1926.

³⁷ For more information about on-going research on the Diamond War Memorial, see <http://www.holywelltrust.com/diamond-war-memorial.htm> and <http://www.diamondwarmemorial.com>.

³⁸ Harbour Museum, Derry, MSS 3, Unveiling Ceremony Invitation card, 1927.

on such an occasion were pride and sorrow. Ready's definition of pride catered to Ulster Unionism when he stated "that these sons of Londonderry have shown how they were prepared to sacrifice all in order to carry on this glorious heritage of devotion to the Crown handed down to them by their fathers."³⁹ Following Ready's address, everyone in attendance observed one minute of silence. Several musical selections signaled the end of the commemorative component of the ceremony; the choir sang a hymn titled "The Supreme Sacrifice," and buglers from the Sherwood Foresters played "Last Post" and "Reveille."

As the ceremony moved toward its conclusion Lady Anderson formally handed the memorial over to the city Corporation. In doing so her speech navigated away from the stark political overtones of Ready's speech, and instead emphasized more widely held ideals stating that the memorial stood as a reminder to the citizens of Derry that during "the great war Derry's sons and daughters were true to her glorious history and willing to lay themselves on the altar of sacrifice in defence (sic) of their country, justice, and liberty."⁴⁰ After accepting the memorial on behalf of the city, the Mayor mentioned how Derry answered the call to defend the Empire in the war, and laid a wreath on the memorial on behalf of the citizens of Derry. Councilor H. Crawford McCay laid another wreath on behalf of the British Legion to conclude the dedication ceremony.⁴¹ Prior to the ceremony the War Memorial Committee circulated a notice in the local papers informing

³⁹ *Derry Journal*, 24 June 1927.

⁴⁰ *Derry Journal*, 24 June 1927.

⁴¹ Harbour Museum, Derry, MSS 3, Draft of the City of Londonderry War Memorial Unveiling, 1927; *Derry Journal*, 24 June 1927; Diamond War Memorial Project, Memorial History, <http://www.diamondwarmemorial.com/pages/history>.

people that they needed to contact the Committee if they wished to lay a wreath after the unveiling ceremony. This was met by a healthy response from local groups, representatives of the disbanded Irish regiments, and the families of the dead. Wreaths were also laid on behalf of both the 36th (Ulster) Division and the 16th (Irish) Division.⁴²

The Diamond War Memorial in Derry constitutes one of the largest and most impressive local war memorials in Ireland. It stands at 38 feet 6 inches tall and consists of three main columns of smooth-finished Portland limestone. The center column, being the tallest, is topped with a bronze figure of a winged Lady Victory raising a laurel wreath above her head in her right hand, and a sword in her left hand pointing behind her and towards the ground as if removed from battle. Lady Victory stands atop the earth with her right foot stepping on a snake that is trying to constrict the world. The center column is flanked by two shorter columns, one topped with a sailor carrying a sack and the other topped with a soldier in full battle gear, positioned in a fighting stance and preparing a downward thrust with his bayoneted rifle. Taken together, these statues represent Derry's preparedness for war and the ultimate victory achieved by the Allies over forces that threatened the established world order. Bronze lettering adorns the front of the central column that reads, "TO OUR HONOURED DEAD AND THOSE WHO SERVED 1914-1918."⁴³ On the four corners of the central column four bronze plaques carry the names of the 756 Derry men who died in the Great War, listed alphabetically by surname. The

⁴² Harbour Museum, Derry, MSS 3, Letter from Thompson to Muir, 14 June 1927; Letter from Muir to Thompson, 15 June 1927.

⁴³ *Londonderry Sentinel*, 25 June 1927. The years 1939-1945 were added to the memorial at a later date, but no additional names were added.

sides of the plaques are decorated with vertical laurel bunting. Situated in the heart of the old walled city, the Diamond Memorial takes up the entire area and commands attention from all passers-by.



Figure 4: *The Diamond War Memorial, Derry from the front (left) and the back (right).*

Belfast

For several years after the war Belfast lacked a local war memorial, a situation the Northern Irish capitol shared with other major Irish cities. Forced to utilize a temporary cenotaph, similar to the Dublin Remembrance Day ceremonies, the city the Belfast erected and dedicated a permanent war memorial on the grounds of city hall in 1929. The unveiling and dedication of the memorial coincided with Remembrance Day, and Field Marshal the Viscount Allenby presided over the ceremony. The program for the city's annual Remembrance Day commemoration remained the same, and the unveiling and dedication was scheduled to take place before the normal proceedings began. A musical

selection, “Land of Hope and Glory,” performed by the band of the Royal Ulster Rifles opened the ceremony and was followed by the singing of the hymn “O God, Our Help in Ages Past” and a prayer.⁴⁴

The bulk of the unveiling ceremony consisted of reading messages from King George V and other prominent individuals, and speeches given by other luminaries in attendance. The King praised “the pursuit of the high ideals for which these lives were readily given in the Great War,” while the message from Admiral John Jellicoe, president of the British Legion, spoke of the “loyalty” of the men of Belfast and the example they established for future generations for serving King and country by fighting “for the sacredness of Treaties and the protection of the weak.” Lord Edward Carson, a leading Unionist, was unable to attend, but nevertheless sent a message that spoke of the sacrifices made by the men of Belfast as well as his “gratification” that Viscount Allenby, a decorated British soldier and Peer, performed the unveiling. Lord Mayor of Belfast, Sir William Coates, addressed the crowd before handing the ceremony over to Viscount Edmund Allenby for the formal unveiling of the cenotaph.⁴⁵

Allenby addressed the assembly and extolled the virtues of Belfast’s men who went off to war and the women who helped out in war industries. He spoke of how the citizens of Belfast upheld the ideals and virtues of patriotism and seemed to give tacitly his support to the unionist cause, stating that “[u]pheld by such principles [of patriotism], a people need fear no isolation; it can stand alone, self reliant, and a friend to all others.”

⁴⁴ *Belfast Telegraph*, 11 November 1929.

⁴⁵ *Belfast Telegraph*, 11 November 1929.

Allenby further alluded to the bond between Britain and Northern Ireland, saying the heroes they were there to honor helped blaze the trail that allowed “our Empire show the world the road to honest accord, goodwill and peace.”⁴⁶ When Allenby finished speaking he pulled a cord, releasing the Union Jack covering the front of the memorial, to reveal the memorial’s inscription, reading “PRO DEO ET PATRIA, Erected by the City of Belfast in memory of her heroic sons who made the supreme sacrifice in the Great War, 1914-1918, Faithful unto death they are remembered with pride and gratitude.” The Bishop of Down, Rev. Charles T. P. Grierson, then dedicated the memorial and the buglers from the Royal Ulster Rifles band signified the commencement of the two minutes silence by playing “The Last Post” at eleven o’clock. Once the buglers played “Reveille” to signal the end of the silence, former Lord Mayor and chairman of the War Memorial Committee, Sir William Turner, formally handed over the memorial to the city corporation, after which wreaths were laid on the monument and the dedication came to a close.

Located in the “sunken gardens” on the west end of the city hall complex, Belfast’s war memorial consisted of more than a single sculpture. Standing at the south end of the garden, a cenotaph rests in front of a semi-circular colonnade, all of which are carved of Portland stone and designed along classical lines, by W. J. Campbell and Sons of Belfast. The cenotaph stands thirty feet tall and ten feet wide. In addition to the above-mentioned inscription, a quote from the King is inscribed on the base at the front of the memorial, which read “Throughout the long years of struggle which have now so gloriously ended the men of Ulster have proved how nobly they fight and die. George R.

⁴⁶ *Belfast Telegraph*, 11 November 1929.

I.” On the back of the cenotaph, the words “They dedicated their lives to a great cause, and their achievements by sea and land and air won undying fame.” Down several steps, a footpath runs the length of the sunken garden from the front of the cenotaph to the square in front of the city hall building. At forty-five feet wide, an east-to-west footpath runs across the sunken garden, and a stone circle accents the juncture of the two footpaths. Facing south from the north end of the Garden of Remembrance the ceremonial approaches form a Celtic cross. Furthermore, the crossing footpaths create four separate sections, which are covered with grass. The entire garden was designed to accommodate the participants in the annual Remembrance Day ceremony, and the footpaths and lawn sections form boundaries between different groups, essentially creating a hierarchy of importance, with those closest to the cenotaph being at the top. The choice of a cenotaph for the city’s war memorial brought with it comparisons to the National Memorial in London, which was quite similar, as the editors of the *Belfast Newsletter* astutely pointed out. In Belfast, this similarity is indicative of the strong unionist presence in city and its administration.⁴⁷ Modeling their war memorial after London’s suggested continuity in regards to Belfast’s position within the empire in the past, the present, and the future.

The political connotations of Northern Irish war memorials were vastly different from those in the south. Perhaps the most overt difference was the role of local government in the construction and dedication of the northern war memorials. In Derry and Belfast, the city corporations took an active and leading role in getting the memorials built, while in Cork the city did little more than rubber stamp their approval. Here a stark

⁴⁷ *Belfast Newsletter*, 11 November 1929.

contrast between official and vernacular memory exists. Because the northern establishment embraced the memory of the war it became synonymous with official memory. In the south, support at the official level tended to come from individuals in government or other positions of power, but was not widely accepted. In the south, the political motivations of the ex-service community appear more complex than in the north. Southern ex-servicemen competed with a powerful republican nationalist majority to validate their brand of Irish identity. In the North, the situation was somewhat different because the Ulster Unionist identity was already the majority. However, its proponents obviously felt threatened by the south and compensated by highlighting their association with Britain using war memorials and the dedication occasions.

The language used at the Belfast memorial unveiling highlights the connection between the commemorative and the political. First, reading a message from the King that includes what amounts to a secular blessing of the war memorial; references to the Empire in conjunction with plural pronouns, such as “we,” “our,” or “us”; and the presence, of a highly decorated British peer and military officer are all strong statements of solidarity with Great Britain on the part of northern unionists. Second, the text on the memorial itself helps to flesh out some aspects of the Northern Irish unionist identity. The use of the Latin “Patria” in the memorial’s main inscription alludes to both Northern Ireland and Great Britain as fatherland. The dual meaning of this term is evident in the way that Remembrance Day and the unveiling ceremonies discussed the war dead. On the one hand, the loss of so many men caused both pride and sorrow locally as their family and friends feel their deaths. On the other hand, the sacrifices made by the war dead are

extrapolated into higher-minded ideals of patriotism that were manifested through service to King and country. This idea is most commonly expressed in the mythological status the Battle of the Somme has taken on in the North, when the 36th (Ulster) Division went over the top on the opening day of the battle and lost thousands of men. Somme mythology quickly assumed a place next to the Battle of the Boyne as examples of the loyal North.⁴⁸ Among Northern Unionists there was no doubt about which country their men died for: Great Britain. By upholding the ideals of Britain and the empire, Northern Unionists were able to preserve their position within the United Kingdom. Therefore, in the north the concept of “patria” refers simultaneously to the United Kingdom and the “loyal North.”

Of course the elaborate design of the Belfast City War Memorial did not please everyone. Lieutenant-Colonel W. R. Goodwin, while speaking at the opening of the new British Legion hall in Ballycastle in 1927, said that the planned memorial garden wasted a considerable amount of the money raised for the project. A simple cenotaph in the city center would suffice to fill needs of the Belfast community, and the remaining funds could then be put towards fighting the distress facing so many ex-servicemen in Northern Ireland. Goodwin’s comments fell on deaf ears and the Remembrance Garden at Belfast’s City Hall went ahead as planned.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ David Officer, “‘For God and for Ulster’: the Ulstermen on the Somme,” in *History and Memory in Modern Ireland*, Ian R. McBride, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001): 184-203.

⁴⁹ *Irish Independent*, 8 December 1927.



Figure 5: *Belfast City War Memorial Garden (left) and cenotaph inscription (right).*

Private War Memorials

In all four of these Irish cities, it took a considerable amount of time, due to myriad reasons, to erect a public war memorial for local use. Despite its designation as the National war memorial, the ex-service community in and around Dublin predominantly used the Islandbridge memorial, typically on Remembrance Day although some groups utilized the park at other times as well. Scale and cost were two of the major contributors to the late completion dates of these memorials. However, private memorials were often commissioned and dedicated much quicker, and came at a more reasonable cost, this was especially true of church memorials. Private memorials constitute prime examples of vernacular memory. Commissioned entirely outside the guise of political establishments, private memorials developed the vernacular memory of the Great War in Ireland. These memorials reflected the sentiments of individuals and smaller groups and

provide a more accurate picture of how the Irish remembered the war away from the spectacle of large-scale public commemorations. The main Catholic and Protestant churches in Cork City put up memorials on their premises fairly soon after the cessation of hostilities, which includes the plaques dedicated by individual families. In Derry, the Derry War Charities Committee commissioned a war dead commemorative window for the Guildhall in the spring of 1919 and Christ Church in Derry City unveiled a plaque and memorial window in honor of the fifty-two men from the congregation who died in the war in November of the same year. This ceremony included music provided by the 1st Battalion Dorset Regiment, and opened with Chopin's "Marche Funèbre."⁵⁰ In nearby Limavady, which sent about 800 men to the war from the town and district and lost seventy-four, the community opted for a utilitarian war memorial and dedicated a new library in early 1922.⁵¹

Several private memorials were commissioned in Belfast in honor of Captain J. S. Davison, the son of a wealthy Belfast businessman, and proprietor of his family's business, the Sirocco Engineering Works. Davison was killed in action during the Somme offensive at Thiepval in 1916. Employees at the firm and business associates managed to raise £550 by 1918 for a memorial fund that enabled the fund's trustees to take several courses of action. First, a memorial tablet was dedicated on the premises of the family business in honor of Captain Davison. Provisions were made to erect a second tablet to all the other employees who fought and fell at the end of the war. An additional £200 was

⁵⁰ *Irish Times*, 24 May, 6 December 1919.

⁵¹ *Londonderry Sentinel*, 4 March 1922.

given to the Ulster Women and Children's Hospital where two beds were named "The J. S. Davison Cots," £100 went to the Orthopedic Branch of the Ulster Volunteer Force Hospital to purchase new equipment for a rehabilitation gymnasium. Finally, the trustees founded "an Engineering Scholarship at the Belfast Technical Institute, to be known as the 'Captain J. S. Davidson Memorial Exhibition,' under which a Gold Medal will be awarded annually, together with a cash prize, the total value of the Exhibition being £10, and applying in particular to the Third Year Course in Mechanical Engineering."⁵² The Davison examples demonstrate how vernacular memory functions on both an individual and collective level. Davison's family and friends were able to avail themselves of a way to remember their son, and at the same time ensure that his legacy and sacrifice benefitted others.

The Guinness Brewing Company at St. James Gate in Dublin was another company that took steps toward commemorating its employees who fought in the Great War. Compiled and printed by December 1920, the Guinness Roll of Honor consisted of a leather bound book "intended as a token of gratitude and honour" that listed the names of the more than 800 men from the company who served in the British Army during the war, and provided the name, rank, regiment, and decorations each man received. Those who were killed in action or died of wounds were denoted with an asterisk. In terms of organization, "[t]he distribution of the names according to department, for convenience of reference, is the sole attempt at classification, for it was felt that any other differentiation would be invidious where all were united in a single aim." This

⁵² Public Record Office Northern Ireland (Hereafter PRONI), D 3642/B/10, Sirocco Employees' Memorial booklet, 1918.

organizational structure for the roll of honor is unique to the company at this time because the daily operations of the Guinness Brewery were very hierarchical, but this document placed everyone on an even social plane, if for a brief moment. The Guinness War Gifts Committee decided to print a copy of the roll of honor and present them to each man who served or to their families.⁵³ After all the books were printed and shipped to the brewery distribution began on 12 December 1921, with presentations scheduled for 2p.m. that day and each successive day until everyone received their copy.⁵⁴ As an influential Anglo-Irish company Guinness had a particular interest in shaping the memory of the war in order to benefit the company and its employees. Therefore, there is little doubt that Guinness considered all of its veterans and employees who died in the war to be inherently Irish. The rapidity with which both the Sirocco and Guinness memorials were funded and completed was more of an exception than the rule in Ireland. Both organizations benefitted because they had the financial support from a successful firm and chose the form of their memorials without external interference.

The Northern Branch of the Irish Rugby Football Union (IRFU) dedicated a memorial to its members who died in the war on 22 January 1926. Like local city war memorials, the construction of the IRFU memorial shows that private organizations were not immune to the delays and setbacks that accompanied the decision to erect a war memorial. As part of a larger organization that consisted of rugby clubs across Ireland,

⁵³ Guinness Storehouse Archive, Dublin, GDB/CO04.06/0041.05, *The Great War, 1914 - 1918, Commemorative Roll, Roll of Honour of Employees Who Served in His Majesty's Naval, Military and Air Forces 1914 - 1918*, Arthur Guinness, Son & Co., Limited, Dublin.

⁵⁴ Guinness Storehouse Archive, Dublin, GDB/CO04.06/0041.04, Printed notice of book presentations, 9 December 1921.

the Northern Branch originally contributed subscriptions to a national Irish Rugby Football Union fund. Calls went out for subscriptions and lists of the fallen to every local branch in the spring of 1920. By September the Northern Branch had raised £70, but still no word had come from Dublin as to the form the memorial would take.⁵⁵ Additional funds were raised for the memorial fund in 1921 when the proceeds from several rugby matches were donated and the year-end report for the 1921-1922 season gave the total in the fund at £150.⁵⁶ After enduring delays from Dublin for several years in regard to the war memorial, the Northern Branch decided to construct their own. Mr. G. G. McCrea, who served on the executive committee of the Northern Branch as both President and Secretary for many years, led the charge for getting the memorial designed and erected. However, the Northern Branch's scheme experienced its own delays due to the lack of a suitable location for the monument until the Irish Rugby Football Union opened their new rugby grounds during the 1923-24 season at Ravenhill in Belfast.

The memorial itself is an example of a hybrid monumental-utilitarian structure and consisted of an arch, which spanned the entry turnstiles, with a clock on top. Contemporaries described the details of the memorial stating that “[t]he arch will be composed of reinforced concrete, [with] the pillars to be 12 feet high. On each column there will be a brass plate with a suitable inscription. Surmounting all will be a beautiful clock of attractive design with two 3 ft. 6 inch dials. The clock, known as the Turret type, with all the latest improvements is being supplied by Messrs. Sharman D. Neill, Ltd.,

⁵⁵ PRONI, D 3867/A/5, IRFU Annual Meeting Minutes, 24 September 1920.

⁵⁶ PRONI, D/3867/A/6, Irish Rugby Football Union (Northern Branch) Annual Report, 1921-22.

Donegall Place, Belfast.”⁵⁷ Dedication of the war memorial coincided with an international match against the French rugby team. Representatives from both countries took part in the pre-match unveiling and dedication ceremony.⁵⁸ The memorial came at a total cost of £340 and subscriptions, by this time, amounted to £215. After a final effort to initiate a shilling fund drive, whereby every member of every branch would donate a shilling to the erase the deficit, only raised an additional £70 by April 1927, the executive committee then decided that it would pay the remaining £55 out of the current season’s funds in order to be clear of the debt.⁵⁹ While one might expect wholesale support of this type of endeavor in the north, the financial issues surrounding the Northern Irish branch of the Irish Rugby Football Union memorial illustrates that despite the political differences between the north and south as regarded the memory of the war, at a basic cultural level both sections of the Irish population faced the same struggles when they sought to commemorate their war dead through public memorials.

International Irish War Memorials

Memorials to the Irish men who served and died in the Great War were not confined to the geographical borders of Ireland. Several memorials to Irish units were erected on the Western Front in France and Belgium, and other places where Irish troops saw action during the course of the First World War. Like many of the war memorials constructed in the Free State, the memorials to the 10th and 16th Divisions did not receive

⁵⁷ PRONI, D/3867/A/7, News clipping, n.d.

⁵⁸ PRONI, D/3867/A/7, Irish Rugby Football Union (Northern Branch) Annual Report, 1925-26.

⁵⁹ PRONI, D/3867/A/7, IRFU Senior Committee Meeting Minutes, 15 January 1927, 12 April 1927.

considerable attention until after 1923, when Ireland's political climate began to stabilize. In contrast, a memorial to the 36th (Ulster) Division was built and dedicated by November 1921.⁶⁰ Although these memorials were constructed beyond the purview of the average Irish citizen they served a useful purpose as places of pilgrimage and recognition of the Irish contribution to the Great War.

The first Divisional memorial in Europe for any of the three Irish Divisions was that of the 36th (Ulster). Before the war ended, the 36th's role in the Battle of the Somme took on mythic proportions in Northern Ireland. By April 1919, James Craig, MP, wrote to the commanding General of the 36th Division in France to inform him of the Northern community's desire to erect a war memorial. From the outset it was clear to all involved that the memorial should be situated at Thiepval where the 36th fought on the opening day of the Somme. Sir Edward Carson, the leader of the Ulster Unionist Party in Northern Ireland, had received over £5,000 in subscriptions for this project by this time and began making initial plans for the memorial. Craig noted that it would be unnecessary to contract out the tasks of surveying and mapping the memorial site because Major J. Chartres Boyle, a former member of the division, was an architect and surveyor, and volunteered to assist in the scheme.⁶¹ The design of the memorial is a replica of Helen's Tower on the Clondeboye Estate overlooking Belfast Lough, an appropriate choice considering the estate was used as a training ground for Irish soldiers during the First

⁶⁰ Somme Heritage Centre, Newtownards, Northern Ireland (Hereafter SRC), R7/1996/430, *Ulster's Tribute To Her Fallen Sons*, 10.

⁶¹ TNA WO 32/5868, Letter from James Craig to General Officer, Commanding 36th (Ulster) Division, 7 April 1919.

World War.⁶² Construction of the memorial quickly commenced and by the fall of 1921 the tower was completed. Because of its size, an on-site caretaker was deemed a necessity; this person also served as a battlefield guide for tourists.⁶³

On 19 November 1921, the battlefield memorial to the 36th (Ulster) Division was officially dedicated with great fanfare. Two of Northern Ireland's most prominent politicians, Edward Carson and James Craig, were unable to attend the ceremony due to illness, the former was slated to act as master of ceremonies. In Carson's absence the job fell to Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson, an Ulsterman, who, at that time, was the Chief of the Imperial General Staff and Colonel-Commandant of the Royal Irish Rifles. Dignitaries from Britain, France, and Northern Ireland, both military and civilian, accompanied Wilson at the dedication. Wilson opened the memorial with a souvenir silver key presented to him on the occasion, while French General Maxime Weygand unveiled the tablet in the Memorial Chapel. After religious services from high-ranking clergy of the Presbyterian and Methodist churches in Northern Ireland, the Duchess of Abercorn proceeded to the roof and raised a Union Jack and French Tricolor.⁶⁴

Impressive in size, the memorial to the 36th (Ulster) Division stands seventy-feet tall and has a thirty-five foot flagpole on the roof. From the roof of the memorial visitors can view the battlefields of the Somme. Inscriptions on the memorial pay tribute to both the fallen and surviving members of the Division. On the ground floor a Memorial

⁶² *Belfast Newsletter*, 16 November 1920.

⁶³ TNA WO 32/5868, Letter from James Craig to The Secretary, Battle Exploit Memorials Committee, War Office, 15 September 1921.

⁶⁴ SHC R7/1996/430, *Ulster's Tribute To Her Fallen Sons*, n.d., 10-13.

Chapel that has the first four lines of Alfred Lloyd Tennyson's poem "Helen's Tower" inscribed on the walls.⁶⁵ In addition, space was reserved on the walls of the Memorial Chapel for families to place their own memorial tablets as well. Finally, the structure had three living rooms for a caretaker.⁶⁶ Without question the largest battlefield memorial for all of the Irish Divisions, the 36th Division memorial was one of the earliest battlefield memorials on the Western Front and remains one of the biggest. The memorial carries several principle inscriptions, including one from King George V extolling the virtue of Ulster's fighting men. Like the Belfast city memorial, the inclusion of a quote from the monarch further cements the relationship between the empire and the "loyal North." During Wilson's dedication speech, he mentioned how deeply the local French community regarded the deeds of the 36th division, referring to them as "les braves Anglais." French citizens might not be expected to differentiate between the nationalities that made up the British Army, but this was also a designation that was reported in the *Belfast Telegraph* and reprinted in a souvenir program of the memorial dedication.⁶⁷ In describing the array of Northern Irish people who attended the dedication, the *Telegraph* referenced the north as "the Imperial Province."⁶⁸ The memorial and its dedication was noticeably missing symbols associated with Ireland in lieu of British and imperial associations, such as the use of the Union Jack in the unveiling ceremony. Although they

⁶⁵ The inscription reads "Helen's Tower here I stand,/Dominant over sea and land;/Son's love built me, and I hold/Ulster's love in lettered gold."

⁶⁶ SHC R7/1996/430, *Ulster's Tribute To Her Fallen Sons*, n.d., 13-15.

⁶⁷ SHC R7/1996/430, *Ulster's Tribute To Her Fallen Sons*, n.d., 19.

⁶⁸ SHC R7/1996/430, *Ulster's Tribute To Her Fallen Sons*, n.d., 20.

were unable to attend, the planned attendance of prominent Unionist politicians reinforced the connection between the First World War and Unionist identity in the North. The final page of the dedication program includes mention of the 10th and 16th (Irish) Divisions in addition to the 36th (Ulster), but only insofar as they included Ulstermen in their ranks and war dead, “They have died that others may live, yet they will speak to all generations through the imperishable memory they have bequeathed to Ulster, to Ireland, to the Empire, and to the world.”⁶⁹ This is the only mention of Ireland as a unique geographic or political entity throughout the entire dedication. Clearly, the memorial catered to a Northern Irish unionist identity, which celebrated its uniquely Irish military Division as well as its continued status as a member of the United Kingdom. For Ulster Unionists and the British the memorial served as a reminder of Ulster’s commitment to the United Kingdom.

While the 36th Division memorial was the largest Irish war memorial on the continent it was not the only one. Southern Irish troops from the 2nd Battalion Royal Munster Fusiliers had a memorial built in their honor in Etreux where they fought a deadly rearguard action in August of 1914 during the retreat from Mons. It took the form of a Celtic Cross, modeled after the regimental memorial in Killarney, County Kerry, which commemorated those from the regiment who died on active duty in India and the Boer War.⁷⁰ Dedication took place on 4 June 1922 and consisted of a Catholic mass in the parish church in Etreux sung by the former Chaplain of the battalion, Rev. Father Francis

⁶⁹ SHC R7/1996/430, *Ulster’s Tribute To Her Fallen Sons*, n.d., 54.

⁷⁰ Irish War Memorials, “R.M.F. Memorial, Killarney, R.M.F. Memorial,” <http://www.irishwarmemorials.ie/html/showMemorial.php?show=94>.

Gleeson, followed by an organized march to the cemetery where the memorial was unveiled. Father Gleeson blessed the memorial and various dignitaries in attendance made speeches as well. Additional information regarding this memorial and its dedication is scant, aside from an itinerary of the day's events provided to the officers, NCOs, and men of the 2nd Battalion Royal Munster Fusiliers. This suggests that Irish men of all ranks made the pilgrimage to France for the dedication, but little is known about how many did so or their role in the ceremony itself.⁷¹

The following year, 1923, another Irish contingent made a pilgrimage to a First World War battlefield site for commemorative purposes. According to historian Fergus D'Arcy, members of the Cork Branch of the Legion of ex-Servicemen erected and unveiled a memorial at Mons to the memory of the Irish War dead on Remembrance Day that year. D'Arcy does not specify which memorial this party went to unveil, as there are three that honor Irish troops in Mons, one each for the Royal Munster Fusiliers, the 5th Royal Irish Lancers, and the 2nd Royal Irish Regiment. Given the point of origin of the visiting groups they were most likely in France to honor the Royal Munster Fusiliers.⁷² Regardless, their presence on the European battlefields reinforces the commitment of the ex-service community in the Free State, and in this example, specifically Cork, to maintain the memory of the war and their fallen comrades.

⁷¹ Imperial War Museum, London (Hereafter IWM), 80/13/1A, "Arrangements for the unveiling of the memorial to the officers, N.C.O.'s, and men of the 2nd Bn. Royal Munster Fusiliers at Etreux on Sunday June 4th, 1922."

⁷² D'Arcy, 182.

The steady stream of Irishmen engaged in commemorative activities continued the following summer when representatives from the same Cork organization traveled to Ypres to visit the continental battlefields. In Cork the send off for the pilgrims was impressive. Meeting in the South Mall, the pilgrims paraded to the station via St. Patrick Street, which was densely crowded with well-wishers. The procession was headed by the Legion's fife and drum band and color guards bearing the Union Jack and Irish tricolor. Given that the procession consisted of veterans of the British Army, the use of the Union Jack comes as little surprise, even in Cork where republican activity was highest in this period. However, its juxtaposition to the Irish tricolor communicated the view that the ex-servicemen were *Irish* men who had served in the British Army and did not view themselves as British. Making their way to Waterford, the Cork party was joined there by additional pilgrims from throughout Munster province, as well as one from Ballymena, County Antrim and two from Howth, County Dublin.⁷³

Once in Ypres, the Munster party unveiled the location outside St. Martin's Cathedral where the Munster Memorial Cross was to be built. Construction delays meant that the cross itself was absent from the ceremony, and a stone pedestal was used in its place. Over 170 Irish soldiers attended the service, which included prayers from an Irish priest and speeches by Sir Bryan Mahon and Count Gerald O'Kelly, the Irish Free State's representative in Belgium. When it was finally erected, the memorial, which was the work of a local sculptor from Cork, took the form of a Celtic Cross adorned with carved Celtic knot work and the three crowns emblem of the Munster Province. The memorial's

⁷³ *Freeman's Journal*, 7 July 1924.

inscription read, “In memory of those men of Munster who died fighting for freedom. A tribute erected by the people of the Province and Cork its capital city.”⁷⁴ Although no accounts of the actual unveiling ceremony exist, the wording of the memorial’s inscription is quite suggestive. Often southern Ireland’s role in the war was tied to the fight for the rights of small nations, however, in this instance such an explicit connection is absent. The phrase “fighting for freedom” could, therefore, reference any or all of the following: the rights of small nations; the brand of Irish independence advocated by constitutional nationalists; the legitimacy of the overseas military engagements of the Irish veterans of the First World War in relation to domestic engagements of Republicans. To this last point, the memorial and its inscription advocate a brand of Irish patriotism scorned by Republicans in the Free State.

Although these visits provoked consternation from the Free State government and O’Kelly, who opposed the entire affair and only participated in the ceremony because he had to, both trips suggest a level of concern with preserving the memory of the Irish war dead among the southern Irish, especially in Cork during the period of the Irish Civil War. Both of these trips overseas were organized and funded locally. At that time, the Irish ex-service groups lacked the organization and structure of the British Legion, and we have already seen that more than one such group existed in Cork at the time. Since Cork was one of the main recruiting areas for the Royal Munster Fusiliers it is easy to see why people from that area would be interested in visiting these places. Prominent figures

⁷⁴ *Freeman’s Journal*, 7 July 1924; *Irish Times*, 10 July 1924; “World War One Battlefields: Flanders: Ypres,” <http://www.ww1battlefields.co.uk/flanders/ypres.html>; Untitled Web Page, <http://www.wo1.be/eng/database/dbDetail.asp?TypeID=1&SubTypeID=30&ItemID=5583>. See also *Irish Times*, 16 June 1924.

in the Cork ex-service community continued to be concerned with the status of the Munster memorial, using the occasion of the unveiling of the Cork City war memorial to run an ad in the *Cork Examiner* detailing the need to clear off the approximately £500 of debt remaining on the monument. The hope was to have the debt cleared by the time of the dedication of the newly reconstructed Cathedral and Cloth Hall in Ypres where the memorial stood. Through its inception, erection, and dedication, the Munster Memorial Cross illustrates the local, national, and international pride in the Irish memory of the First World War.

Of course, the Munster memorial was just one of several dedicated to Irish soldiers of the First World War, and Sir William Hickie and the Irish National War Memorial Committee oversaw the erection of additional memorials to larger military formations. The 16th (Irish) Divisions had two built at Wytshaete in Belgium and Ginchy in France respectively, while the 10th (Irish) Division had one erected in Serbia. A memorial to the 16th Division at Ginchy existed as early as 1916. Hickie explained that a few months after the 16th Division took the towns of Guillemont and Ginchy during the Battle of the Somme in September 1916 the Divisional Pioneers found a beam from a ruined farmhouse and fashioned it into a memorial cross, which was erected between the two cities. Following the war the land upon which the memorial was erected was once again turned to farmland, and in 1923 the War Office contacted Hickie to inform him that the memorial needed to be moved upon the request of the landowner.⁷⁵ This set into motion the plans of the Irish National War Memorial Committee to replace the cross with

⁷⁵ TNA WO 32/5895, Letter from B. B. Oubitt to Sir William Hickie, 10 April 1923.

a permanent one and erect two additional crosses, those intended for Wytschaete and Gallipoli, at a total cost of £1,500.⁷⁶ Each of the three Celtic cross memorials was made out of granite and bore the inscription, “Do chum Glóire Dé agus Onóra na hÉireann” (To the Glory of God and Honour of Ireland) in Irish.⁷⁷ General Hickie chaired the sub-committee of the National War Memorial Committee that selected the design and inscriptions for the monuments.⁷⁸ The choice of an Irish language inscription is interesting since the revival of the language is typically associated with the republican nationalist movement. The use of the Irish tongue, therefore, reinforces the idea that although Irish men fought in the British army during the First World War they were first and foremost Irish. The cross bound for Wytschaete was used as the centerpiece of the Dublin Remembrance Day celebration at St. Stephen’s Green in 1925 prior being permanently dedicated on the continent.⁷⁹

In August 1926 a large traveling party left Dublin for the continent, amid fanfare reminiscent of the Cork pilgrimage several years earlier, to unveil the crosses at Wytschaete and Guillemont. Once the cross at the Wytschaete ceremony had been blessed by the former senior Catholic Chaplain of the 16th Division, Rev. Fr. Morris O’Connell, General Sir Bryan Mahon gave a speech. Both the British and Belgian national anthems were played at the dedication, but not that of the Irish Free State. The

⁷⁶ Jeffery, *Ireland and the Great War*, 111.

⁷⁷ “Remembrance – Memorials (part 1),” <http://www.greatwar.ie/rem-mem.html>.

⁷⁸ TNA WO 32/5895, Letter from Sir William Hickie to The Secretary, War Office, London, 21 November 1923.

⁷⁹ *Belfast Telegraph*, 11 November 1925.

Irish participants carried a replica banner of the one presented by King Louis XV to the Irish Brigade for fighting alongside the French during the wars of the Austrian Succession in the eighteenth century; the banner was used at the Guillemont ceremony the next day, too. The following day (23 August) a similar service was conducted at Guillemont, after which the southern Irish party visited the 36th (Ulster) memorial at Thiépval and laid a wreath before beginning their return journey. On 24 August, members of the Irish delegation stopped to lay a wreath on the tomb of the Belgian Unknown Soldier. On this occasion, the flags of both Union Jack and Irish Free State were displayed. En route to Dublin, they stopped in London where the party was granted an audience with the king, and they laid wreaths on the national cenotaph in Whitehall and the tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Westminster Abbey. After attending a Catholic Mass in London, the group returned to Dublin.⁸⁰ The third cross, honoring the 10th (Irish) Division who served in Gallipoli, Salonika, and Palestine and meant for Gallipoli, was not dedicated on the trip and problems procuring land for the memorial in Turkey forced the Irish National War Memorial Committee to relocate it to Lake Dorian in Serbia. After the dedication of the Guillemont cross in 1926, which was placed in a church cemetery due to a French law that only allowed crosses to be erected on church property, the original wooden cross was taken to Ireland and became the centerpiece of the annual Remembrance Day ceremony in Dublin.⁸¹

⁸⁰ TNA WO 32/5895, Trip itinerary, n.d.; Letter from George Graham to Sir Austen Chamberlain, 26 August 1926; *Irish Independent*, 21 August 1926.

⁸¹ IWM 1959-04-116, "The Remembrance Cross and The Irish Divisions," November 1932.



War memorials constituted one way in which the Irish publicly manifested their memory of the First World War. Some war memorials in Northern Ireland, such as the city war memorials in Derry and Belfast constitute aspects of official memory, but across most of the island war memorials and the culture surrounding them resided wholly in the realm of Irish vernacular memory. Given vernacular memory as the dominant cultural milieu, examining these cultural artifacts in the way they were presented by those who created and consumed them generates a more unified picture of Great War commemoration across the island. At the same time, the political overtones associated with these memorials, both foreign and domestic, speak to the way in which members of Ireland's ex-service viewed themselves as Irish. Through inscriptions and the speeches given at memorial unveilings Irish ex-servicemen in the Free State projected an Irish identity that echoed the ideas of constitutional nationalism. Despite the victory of republican nationalism in Ireland, these ex-servicemen placed their sacrifices during the First World War into the same historic pantheon of Irish history as the events central to the republican struggle for independence. In the north, a dual identity committed to the ideas of Northern Ireland as a distinct province and the virtue of the British Empire became reinforced through the mythology of Ulster's role in the Great War and the top-down support from local government authorities in the north. In the south, the lack of involvement by local and national political authorities meant that the erection of war memorials and the events surrounding their dedication remained in the private sector. Whereas the culture of commemoration surrounding war memorials in the north was a

combination of official and vernacular memory, in the south the official aspects of Great War memory failed to surface beyond the support of a small cadre of individuals. Nevertheless, across the island, ex-servicemen in Ireland rallied around these war memorials to give credence, vivacity, and validity to their sub-community and their construction of Irish identity. In doing so, both northern and southern ex-servicemen openly challenged and complicated republican nationalist notions of what it meant to be Irish.

CHAPTER THREE

KEEPING THE HOME FIRES BURNING: MEMORY AND THE GREAT WAR IN IRISH POPULAR CULTURE, 1919-1939

During the interwar period the Free State remained a nation in transition, still part of the British Commonwealth of nations but with a strong public desire for total sovereignty. Within this milieu, the culture of commemoration and remembrance of the First World War extended well beyond the observance of Remembrance Day and the erection of war memorials. While these aspects of commemoration provided a public face to Irish war commemoration the memory of the war manifested itself in many other ways as well. Residing in the realm of popular culture and outside of the government's control, these displays of memory were both public and private expressions of vernacular memory. The memory of the war donned many forms of cultural expression including battlefield pilgrimages, music, film, dances, family-centered events, sports, and the activities of old comrades associations. These miscellaneous expressions of war memory, like the formal memorial expressions of the post-war era challenged and clashed with the dominant republican Irish national identity. On the other hand, this chapter turns its attention toward the vernacular memory of the First World War to flesh out a non-Republican, Irish nation identity that mixed both Gaelic and British cultural symbols and traditions.

Battlefield Pilgrimage

Battlefield memorials to the Irish Divisions created sites of memory for the Irish role in the First World War on the continent itself, and by doing so produced “sites of memory” for commemorative activity. Much like sites of religious pilgrimage, these sites of memory assumed important places in the commemoration of the war. Trips to the continent allowed veterans to relive the camaraderie experienced during the war, and provided friends and families of the deceased an opportunity to visit war graves and personalize their grief to a degree unavailable with communal war memorials. As an aspect of vernacular memory, organized battlefield pilgrimages stood as one of the prominent and continuous ways in which war memorials on foreign soil served this community by generating a sense of bottom-up unity. The earliest pilgrimages originating from the south were undertaken independently and before most of the battlefield memorials existed on the continent.¹ Greater assistance came to all Irish citizens who wished to visit the First World War battlefield in 1928 when the British Legion (which had amalgamated the Irish ex-servicemen groups by this time) made arrangements for a national battlefield pilgrimage that included people from throughout the United Kingdom and Ireland.

Like the adoption of the poppy as the symbol of the Legion, the original impetus for a national battlefield pilgrimage came from the French. In 1927, a large American contingent numbering around 20,000 traveled to France to commemorate their entry into the First World War. The outing was so well received by the people of France that the

¹ One exception being the wooden cross commemorating the 16th (Irish) Division erected at Guillemont in 1916 after the Battle of the Somme.

French government sought to organize a similar program featuring ex-soldiers from the United Kingdom. Plans were made to accommodate a total of 10,000 people from the United Kingdom and Ireland, where “Prince and ploughman, general and private soldier, mother and widow, found unity in something greater even than the discipline of war and, on the very scenes of their kinsmen’s sacrifice, renewed afresh their consecration to the ideal for which it was made.”² Advertisements emphasized that the pilgrimage was open to all ex-service men and women, as well as members of their families over the age of sixteen. Out of the total number of pilgrims, the Irish Free State received an allotment of 500 slots, which were promptly purchased, including 100 slots reserved by women.³

The Free State party left Dublin on the evening of 4 August 1928 and returned on 10 August. Advertisements placed the cost of the trip for Irish pilgrims at £6 3s 9d, which included all transportation, accommodation, and meals.⁴ The Irish Free State contingent was organized into five companies, each with its own Company Conductor, Deputy Company Conductor, and Company Accommodation Officer. The organizers and leaders of the Free State group consisted mainly of prominent members of the Irish Free State Area of the British Legion, including General Sir William Hickie, Capt. William A. Redmond (the son of John Redmond), Major J. J. Tynan, and Mr. A. P. Connolly.⁵

² British Legion, *A souvenir of the battlefields pilgrimage (August 1928)* (London: The Press Printers, 1929), 6.

³ *Irish Independent*, 17 July 1928.

⁴ *Irish Independent*, 21 April 1928.

⁵ British Legion, *The Battlefields Pilgrimage: A Souvenir of the Battlefields Pilgrimage* (1929), 151.

Two weeks before the travelers left for the continent the British Legion hosted a concert in Dublin. Organized under the auspices of the South Dublin Women's Section of the British Legion, the concert contained music played by a quartet that performed classical music and traditional Irish music. For example, one woman performed two classical piano solos, a group dubbed the "Dublin Singers" sang a few selections, and an ex-soldier, J. D. McLoughlin, who lost his sight during the war, sang two songs that were very well received. Overall the event showcased the type of cultural mixing that contributed to the commemorative landscape of the First World War in Ireland. Those in attendance encountered high culture in the performance of classic music as well as popular culture when the set changed to traditional Irish music and familiar religious hymns. The inclusion of both traditional Irish music and western European classical music suggests Irish culture need not be isolated and homogeneous. Whereas republican nationalists looked to an idealized Gaelic past for inspiration and validation of their national identity, Ireland's ex-service community and their ilk recognized the hybridization of Gaelic and English culture as something that created a unique Irish culture as well. The entertainment festivities were sandwiched between two speeches that firmly established the commemorative milieu for the evening. The opening address from Countess Van Cutsen, entitled "The White Crusade," described the upcoming pilgrimage and the feelings of love, loss, and honor associated with the war dead. Before the evening ended, A. P. Connolly spoke on behalf of the British Legion, thanking the organizers and performers, as well as once again touching upon the subject of the upcoming pilgrimage

and honoring the war dead.⁶ Presenting entertainment that appealed to a wide variety of tastes enabled the British Legion to cater to a larger proportion of the ex-service community. The entire event illustrated the close relationship between the memory of the war and Irish culture.

Once everyone arrived in France no two groups on the National Battlefield Pilgrimage followed the same itinerary. Accounts of the trip show that the itineraries took pilgrims to places of interest for each specific group. In the same vein, lodging locations factored into which sites participants were able to see, and no doubt went into deciding where particular groups stayed; the Irish were quartered in the town of Lens. Visitors from the Irish Free State party took in the battlefields of the Somme, Vimy Ridge, and the Ypres Salient. After visiting these areas, a ceremony was held on 8 August at the Menin Gate in Ypres, a British war memorial dedicated to the dead and missing men from the Ypres salient, for all of the groups on the pilgrimage and was led by the Prince of Wales.

Upon arrival in France, and before commencing their commemorative pilgrimage, the Irish paid tribute to the fallen of the city of Lens, France. French officials at Lens, addressed the group before leading them to the city's war memorial. During the short remembrance ceremony at the memorial, Sir William Hickie laid a wreath and addressed those in attendance, speaking of the long-established military relationship between Ireland and France. After the ceremony, the group met the Mayor at the Hotel de Ville, where he, too, welcomed them. The pilgrims then proceeded to get their luggage, find their accommodations, and relax with an evening of dancing at The Alhambra.

⁶ *Irish Times*, 21 July 1928; *Irish Independent*, 21 July 1928.

On the first day of sightseeing, the Irish Free State contingent journeyed to Beaucourt and Guillemont. There they visited the memorial to the 16th (Irish) Division, where Captain William A. Redmond, whose father founded the division, laid a wreath. They took in the memorials dedicated to the Tyneside Irish at La Boiselle and the 36th (Ulster) Division at Thiepval, where a wreath was laid for their Northern comrades. Mr. A. G. Fitt of Limerick, who had served with the South Irish Horse, described the Free State visit to the 36th Division memorial at Thiepval as follows:

From here we turned left down the hill through cornfields scattered with debris of war, crossed a new bridge over the Ancre and climbed the ridge to Thiepval and the Memorial Tower erected to the Ulster Division. What a view we have from the top of it! Down to Albert on one side, Englehelmer in the rear, Beaucourt to the north, and away far behind the old German line. Here memories came back of 1st July 1916, and our thoughts went out to that day on which the big attack commenced. Now we realised in full the valour of the 36th Division and did not blame the division on their flanks for not capturing their objectives. The wonder was that anyone came through alive.

We of the South got a very warm reception from our brothers of the North, and were invited to sign the visitors' book in the Tower.⁷

The following day, the Irish group rode the train to Vimy where they saw memorials dedicated to Canadian, French, and Moroccan forces. While at Vimy, Fitt also noted that the group “first saw the Scotch section, and I saw Sir William Robertson, Sir Ian Hamilton, General Lyle-Smith and Lady Haig, all carrying their own luncheons and going about almost unrecognised, like all the other Pilgrims.”⁸ Fitt’s observation about the commonness of the social elite reinforces the idea that commemoration transcended the hierarchies of quotidian society. To some degree military hierarchies prevailed and

⁷ British Legion, *The Battlefields Pilgrimage: A Souvenir of the Battlefields Pilgrimage* (1929), 84.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 85.

officers acted as leaders or as the master of ceremonies at special events. However, when the issue of remembrance arose the lacunae between officers and enlisted men diminished and all recognized that they possessed a bond that overcame social stratification.

The next day the Irish Free State group joined the other pilgrims at the Menin Gate in Ypres. This ceremony was an opportunity for all who went on the pilgrimage to come together in an act of collective remembrance. The Archbishop of York addressed the assembled masses, followed by the two minutes silence, and buglers playing the “Last Post” and “Reveille.” “After the service came the March Past, for which the Prince of Wales, Prince Charles of Belgium, Admiral [John] Jellicoe and other notables mounted a covered dais in the Square facing the ruins of the Cloth Hall,” which was a major medieval commercial center destroyed during the First World War.⁹ The first Irish group in the march was the Women’s Section, and they were well received, especially because women led and carried the standards for the party.

In addition to taking part in the services and ceremonies on the itinerary, the Irish company brought with them a distinct sense of community that came alive during their brief sojourn to the continent. The culture of commemoration intermingled with the prevailing social and cultural idioms of the day. In the evenings the pilgrims spent their time socializing over drinks and dancing. Furthermore, the presence of an Irish piper who had served in the war with the St John Ambulance Brigade, brought a bit of Ireland back to the western front when he walked the main streets of Lens in the morning blaring his pipes in lieu of an alarm. He also helped to keep morale high, playing old battle tunes and

⁹ Ibid.

other music as the pilgrims walked to various destinations. One song that regained its wartime popularity was “It’s A Long Way To Tipperary,” which often found its way onto the lips of the Irish pilgrims during the trip.

The entire battlefield pilgrimage experience proved to be cathartic for many of the Irish pilgrims. Individuals or small groups often took time to visit memorials or gravesites of personal interest, and the shared sense of loss and empathy among the pilgrims, according to Fitt, meant that “there was little evidence that we had many with us for whom the Pilgrimage meant renewed throbbing of wounds that had never healed.”¹⁰ By providing easy access to the battlefields of France to those who might not otherwise be able to go, the pilgrimage bolstered the Great War’s commemorative landscape among those Free Staters fortunate enough to participate. Prior to the national pilgrimage, most pilgrimages consisted of men, ex-soldiers, officers, and dignitaries, with the express purpose of dedicating or unveiling a memorial. The 1928 pilgrimage, however, opened the experience up to a broader cross-section of society and allowed for a longer period of reflection and immersion in the commemorative landscape of the First World War, which further benefited from the sense of community generated among the Irish pilgrims.

Reflecting upon the national battlefield pilgrimage, the British Legion in Ireland and those who went on the trip considered the event a resounding success. On the British side, the Prince of Wales went so far as to suggest that such an event should take place annually, but an event of the same size and scope never materialized. Nevertheless, individual Areas of the British Legion managed to organize their own pilgrimages. In

¹⁰ Ibid., 86.

Ireland, the Southern Area arranged for another battlefield pilgrimage in 1930 based on the success of the 1928 trip and on this occasion their comrades from Northern Ireland joined them. This time the cost for the all-inclusive event was an even £7 from Dublin. In order to ensure that everyone who wanted to participate could do so the Irish Legion offered reduced rates to people from the provinces. Eligibility for the Irish sponsored pilgrimage remained the same as those for the national battlefield pilgrimage in 1928. During the weeklong journey, which was scheduled to leave 26 July and return 1 August 1930, the pilgrims were scheduled to visit the Somme battlefields, Arras, Albert, Ginchy, Guillemont, and the Ypres Salient. Sir William Hickie and A. P. Connolly reprised their roles as leaders of the pilgrimage and the home base moved from Lens to Lille.¹¹ A total of 355 people participated in the 1930 pilgrimage organized by the British Legion in the Irish Free State.

A welcome similar to the one in Lens two years earlier greeted the Irish pilgrims in 1930. Captain William Redmond addressed those in attendance, stating his hope that exercises like the pilgrimage would help to strengthen the bonds between Irish, French, and British ex-servicemen and “help towards attaining the ideals of all three—the abolition of war.”¹² Many of the sites visited on this trip were the same as the previous pilgrimage; wreaths were laid at the Ulster Tower at Thiepval and at the 16th Division memorial in Guillemont. Nevertheless, in some respects this trip was less structured and pilgrims had the opportunity to visit cemeteries of individual interest, as well as to take the train to Paris and Lens so that they could reunite with acquaintances from the

¹¹ *Irish Independent*, 21 March 1930, 25 July 1930.

¹² *Irish Independent*, 29 July 1930.

previous pilgrimage.¹³ More ceremonies took place when the contingent visited Ypres. Here the Burgomaster, M. Henri Castoique welcomed members of the 16th and 36th Divisions in attendance, and stated, “Unity of religious faith makes Irishmen and Belgians good friends.” He also informed the Irish pilgrims that the parish priest of Wyttschaete said the *De Profundis* at the foot of the Irish memorial cross every All Souls’ Day for the repose of the souls of the fallen Irish soldiers in the Great War.¹⁴

Members of the Irish Free State Area of the British Legion organized yet another pilgrimage in 1933, that brought about 120 people back to the Western Front and followed an itinerary similar to the 1930 trip. In addition to marketing the trip to the Irish ex-service community, the Legion tried to appeal to the general vacationer, advertising the trip as a cost effective option for the average holiday-seeker.¹⁵ Here, again, we see the intersection of culture and the legacy of the Great War. Trying to sell the battlefield pilgrimage as a tourist attraction not only intended to appeal to vacationers, but in doing so helped to raise awareness of the Irish role in the Great War, the sacrifices made by Irish soldiers, and the work of the British Legion as it continued to help maintain the memory of the war in Ireland.

Memory of the First World War in Irish Popular Culture

Battlefield pilgrimages stood as very public and high profile aspects of Ireland’s culture of Great War memory and contributed to the shaping and context of that collective memory there. However, this type of project required a significant amount of

¹³ *Irish Times*, 30 July 1930.

¹⁴ *Irish Times*, 1 August 1930.

¹⁵ *Irish Independent*, 21 June, 1933, 8 July 1933, 7 August 1933; *Irish Times*, 12 August 1933.

capital and organization before becoming available to the Irish public. Because this sort of event did not occur on a regular basis, the ex-service community turned to other cultural forms to provide the camaraderie that defined it. Once again the British Legion was involved in proactively finding ways to bring other cultural activities to their constituents and those whose sympathies lay with Irish ex-servicemen. At the heart of these activities, which included dances, concerts, and other types of family-oriented entertainment, such as fairs and carnivals, was a desire to build community through entertainment. In addition to cohering ex-service communities throughout Ireland, hosting events that appealed to the general public also brought in a stream of funds that helped the Legion continue its operations in Ireland. While the British Legion facilitated many of these popular cultural activities, there were some that operated beyond the purview of the Legion. Most common of these were the dealings of old comrades associations, which had a more focused goal of maintaining the camaraderie of specific Irish regiments, an aim that also had the cursory effect of limiting the number of members in these organizations.

The range of cultural events conducted under the auspices of the British Legion was quite broad. Concerts or dances commonly took place near the eleventh of November, but that was not the only time when this type of function took place. While many war memorials were dedicated in months other than November and pilgrimages undertaken in the summer months, the offerings of the Legion were spread throughout the entire year, too.

One cultural element that added color to remembrance events or stood as an entity unto itself was music. Music played a crucial part in Remembrance Day services. The “Last Post” and “Reveille” occupied a special place in these ceremonies because of their direct connection to the British army and their use as markers to begin and to end the two minutes silence. Local organizers used their own discretion when choosing other selections for Remembrance Day activities. Commonly, additional musical selections consisted of reflective hymns and other religious music. In the years that the Dublin Remembrance Day ceremony included a procession from the city center to the Phoenix Park, music emerged more organically when the processionists broke into song. On these occasions, the selections tended to be songs popular during the war: “It’s A Long Way To Tipperary,” “Keep The Home Fires Burning,” “Pack Up Your Troubles In Your Old Kit Bag.”¹⁶ Like the “Last Post” and “Reveille” these musical selections had a direct association with the war, and elicited a sense of nostalgia from ex-servicemen. The song “Neuve Chappel,” set to the tune of “The Rambling Irishman,” recognized the fortuitousness of several Irish regiments fighting at Neuve Chappel in 1915. The song’s stresses the camaraderie and heroics of Irish soldiers in the British military and claims that “Neuve Chappel was won by an Irishman.” The song was understandably popular among the Irishmen in the British military.¹⁷ Occasionally, the British Legion organized special concerts, like the one mentioned above in support of the battlefield pilgrimage in 1928, and the South Dublin Branch of the Women’s Section of the British Legion

¹⁶ *Dublin Evening Mail*, 11 November 1929.

¹⁷ Max Arthur, *When This Bloody War Is Over: Soldiers’ Songs of the First World War* (London: Piatkus, 2001), 78.

annually coordinated a tea and concert for ex-servicemen during the 1920s and 1930s.¹⁸ Music provided visibility for the Legion in other ways as well. Various drum and fife bands or more standardized musical configurations were affiliated with the British Legion. These groups often performed for the public at park concerts, or were hired out to supply music to private events, such as dances.

In addition to these performances, songs that referenced the war began to appear in Ireland's rich folk music tradition after the war. Folk music was, and remains, a vitally important component of Irish culture. Therefore, the appearance of the Great War in Irish folk music comes as little surprise. Folk music provided an avenue for average citizens to offer their own take on current or past events. Because no one group controlled the folk music tradition it became a venue of contestation between the ex-service community and republicans. Folk balladry is one cultural milieu where republicans went on the offensive, attacking the jingoism of the First World War. Doing so through the medium of folk music shows that republicans considered the folk tradition as a component of their Irish national identity and by using folk music to attack the memory of the Great War and the brand of Irish identity that accompanied it, republicans attempted to exclude other conceptions of Irishness.

The song "Salonika," which remains a staple in the national folk music canon, has its roots in Cork and presents the perspective of two Cork women, one whose husband has gone off to war and the other whose husband joined the Irish republican movement. The soldier's wife laments her husband's absence, wartime inflation, and the role of

¹⁸ D. D. Sheehan, ed., *British Legion Annual: Southern Ireland Area 1939-40* (Dublin: Dollard, 1939), 13, 15.

shirkers in the local community, while the Sinn Fein wife criticizes the lack of progress at the front, points out the human cost of war, and ultimately expresses her support for Sinn Fein and the republican cause. It has been suggested that the final verses of “Salonika” that describe war-weariness and support for Sinn Fein were added after the song had already gained popularity, demonstrating the shift in attitudes toward the war after it ended.¹⁹ Clearly, the ways in which folk songs engaged the war experience varied greatly. Furthermore, the fact that folk music was predominantly an oral tradition meant that songs could easily be manipulated and words changed in order to cater to contemporary political perspectives. On the one hand, folk music represented an outlet and a source of entertainment and escapism for people, while on the other hand it could also serve an instructional purpose, delineating the correct aspects of Irish identity from a given perspective.

War-weariness and the rise of the disarmament movement contributed to an anti-war perspective in some songs. The song “Gallipoli” is a parent’s reflection on their son leaving for the war. The narrator, the soldier’s father, juxtaposes his son’s pride at the time he left for the front with his wife’s apprehension. The song’s narrative is written from perspective of hindsight nonetheless, a shift can be detected in the narrative. Initially, the mother’s apprehension related to her concern for her son’s safety and lacks any real political connotation. However, only after the son dies does the father claim that he died for the wrong cause and should have stayed at home to fight in the “greatest war

¹⁹ Jimmy Crowley, *Jimmy Crowley's Irish song book* (Cork: Mercier Press, 1986), 47-48; Donal O Drisceoil, “Conflict and War, 1914-1923,” in *Atlas of Cork City*, John Crowley, Robert Devoy, Denis Linehan, and Patrick O’Flanagan, eds. (Cork: Cork University Press, 2005), 257.

of all.”²⁰ The word “greatest” in this song echoes the popular nomenclature for the First World War, while at the same time subordinating that conflict to the Irish independence movement. Furthermore, when considering the chronology of the events depicted in the song, the fluidity of the relationship between folk music and memory becomes apparent once again. Irish involvement at Gallipoli took place in 1915, well before the Easter Rising of 1916. This song, more than most, describes the point of view of many outside the Irish ex-service community, those who were nationalists at the outset of the war, but once the political tides in Ireland began to shift away from Redmondite constitutional nationalism so too did their support of the Irishmen fighting overseas in support of those ideals.

Republican folk ballads that address the First World War generally fall into one of two categories. The first admonished Irish men who died in the service of the British and therefore were not directly involved with the independence movement, as the republicans understood it. The second built upon an established tradition of deriding British military presence and recruiting techniques in Ireland. Despite the different loci of attack in these songs, both categories shared a similar goal, which was to subordinate the Irish experience in the First World War to the republican struggle for independence.

Songs written for a republican audience, play up the futility of the war and the loss of Irish lives in a British conflict. The ballad, “The Foggy Dew” made a comparative judgment on the worthiness of the Irish fighting in the British army versus those joining the republican movement with the claim “’Twas better to die 'neath an Irish sky than at

²⁰ The Mudcat Cafe, “Lyr Reg: Gallipoli,” <http://mudcat.org/thread.cfm?threadid=6626#1369974>.

Suvla or Sud El Bar.”²¹ Here Sulva references Sulva Bay, which was one of the points of engagement during the Gallipoli campaign, as was Sud El Bar. Using the Gallipoli campaign, which lasted from April 1915 to January 1916 as a point of comparison is salient in the songs mentioned here because the Easter Rising occurred just a few months after the campaign ended and enabled critics to use the losses of the 10th (Irish) Division, which saw action in the Mediterranean theater, in a comparative context with the “heroic martyrs” of the Rising. Gallipoli also reiterates the loss of southern Irish lives in the Great War. The Battle of the Somme, which began about two months after the Rising, proved a less fruitful comparison because of the role of the 36th (Ulster) Division, which saw heavy casualties in the opening days of the battle. Northern losses at the Battle of the Somme became symbolic of Ulster loyalism and the battle quickly assumed mythic proportions in the North, occupying a place next to the Battle of the Boyne in the loyalist pantheon. The memory of the Somme provided a connection between the past and the present for many Northern loyalists and acted as a key building block in the evolution of the loyal North identity in Ulster. By comparison, the Somme was less rhetorically useful to the southern Irish because although the 16th (Irish) Division fought at the Somme, the battle began after the Easter Rising. Gallipoli, which took place before the Rising, resonated more deeply with the southern Irish and juxtaposing Gallipoli with the emerging Irish republican national identity created a more powerful effect. All of this was done in an effort to diminish the political justification of Irish men fighting in the First World War. In inter-war Ireland, this use of folk music as an arena for contesting

²¹ The Mudcat Café, “DigiTrad: THE FOGGY DEW (6),” <http://mudcat.org/@display song.cfm?SongID=9002>.

memory functioned as a direct challenge to the development and acceptance of anything other than the republican Irish national identity.

While some songs, like “Salonika” and “Gallipoli” censured the Irish men who went and fought in the war, others focused on the British agents responsible for many enlistments. Recruiting sergeants had been the object of scorn in several folk ballads before the First World War, however, the events of that conflict combined with the Easter Rising made the derision of British recruiters increasingly fertile ground for balladeers. Oftentimes, recruiting sergeants would wait outside of pubs and take advantage of men in a state inebriation, getting them to enlist. Songs such as “Arthur MacBride” and “The Kerry Recruit,” which date to the mid-nineteenth century, were already common in the Irish folk tradition. Although the songs’ origins are unknown, the stories resonated with the Irish because army recruiters knew that the poorest British subjects, often the Irish, Scots, and Welsh, were the most liable to enlist in order to escape the poverty and destitution of daily life. “Arthur MacBride” tells the story of two friends or relatives, depending on the version, who refuse to be persuaded into joining the British Army by a local recruiting sergeant. The song ends with the two potential recruits accosting and beating the recruiting sergeant and his comrades.²² Given the motives and methods of recruiters in Ireland it comes a little surprise that the Irish resented the way they were treated by these individuals. “The Kerry Recruit” tells the story of a man enlisted to serve in the British Army during the Crimean War. The subject’s initial excitement shifts to a warning message after he loses a limb in battle, and leaves the listener to contemplate the

²² Bodleian Library, “Ballads Catalogue: Harding B 25(82) - Arthur McBride,” [http://bodley24.bodley.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/acwwweng/ballads/image.pl?ref=Harding+B+25\(82\)&id=09276.gif&seq=1&size=1](http://bodley24.bodley.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/acwwweng/ballads/image.pl?ref=Harding+B+25(82)&id=09276.gif&seq=1&size=1).

merits of military service, whether a pension and disability pay is worth losing one's health or life.²³

The song "The Recruiting Sergeant" brings the trend of deriding recruiting sergeants in Ireland into the twentieth century. Likely written during or shortly after the Great War, the sergeant suggests that the subject would look good in khaki and that serving in Flanders would be akin to a vacation. When challenged on the conditions of the trenches, the sergeant claims that they well built and "the wind you won't find blowing." Not convinced, the subject tells the sergeant that he has no intention of going to Flanders when there are battles to be fought in Ireland and that it is about time the English fight their own wars.²⁴ The song makes no mention of the economic gains to be made by joining the military and instead focuses on the conditions at the front lines and ideological justifications for refusing to enlist, namely the worthiness of the Irish republican cause.

For these reasons, the differences between marching songs and folk music is important because it helps to illustrate the fact that the memory of the First World War in Ireland was not always a positive one. Although the ex-service community stressed solidarity and camaraderie, feelings of sadness and anger were a critical component of Great War memory and these feelings found their voice in Irish folk music. Furthermore, the way that the Irish used folk music to engage and contest the memory of the Great War outside the ex-service community helps to demonstrate how deeply the threat of an

²³ The Mudcat Café, "DigiTrad: Kerry Recruit," <http://mudcat.org/@display song.cfm?SongID=3387>.

²⁴ The British Broadcasting Corporation, "BBC - History - 1916 Easter Rising - Rebel Songs - The Recruiting Sergeant," http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/easterrising/songs/rs_song02.shtml.

alternative Irish identity challenged the cultural and political majority in the Free State. The fact that Irish folk music became a battleground for the memory of the Great War in Ireland demonstrates how deeply that memory permeated Irish culture.

Film provided another cultural arena where the Irish contested the memory of the Great War. One of the most explicit examples of this occurred in November 1925. Dublin's Masterpiece Cinema rented a copy of the war film "Ypres" from a British distributor and planned to screen the film around Remembrance Day. Two separate events, a theft and a bombing, characterize the disdain republicans in Ireland held toward this type of war remembrance and the measures they would take to ensure that it did not take place.

At about 2:30pm on Monday, November 9, a number of armed gunmen stole the reels of the film "Ypres" from the Masterpiece Cinema.²⁵ The assailants bought tickets for the show and just as the film was about to begin the men, wielding revolvers forced their way into the projection booth and absconded with seven of the eight film reels. John Moyne, one of the theater employees working in the projection booth testified in court that the thief demanded the film "Ypres" "in the name of the Republic." Moyne and his brother Arthur, who also worked at the theater, gave chase to the men as they fled the scene, and managed to catch one in the theater lobby, James Lee, where they disarmed him after a "scuffle."²⁶ Another witness, John Farrell, who was standing at the entrance of

²⁵ The same day at about 6:30pm, a similar crime took place at the Kingstown Picture House when three masked men stole a film about the Prince of Wales. The film was distributed by the same British company as the film "Ypres." *Irish Times*, 14 November 1925.

²⁶ *Irish Times*, 10 November, 13 November, 14 November, 17 November 1925.

the theater when the incident occurred, testified that he heard someone yell “they have got the film” followed by armed men running past him and getting into a car. Farrell followed the car as it made its get-away and managed to get the license plate number. This information led police to apprehend Maurice Fenlon, who told police that he had “lent the car to a man.”²⁷ Both men were remanded into custody. Charles McEvoy, owner and operator of the Masterpiece Cinema valued the stolen film at £120. Despite the financial cost, McEvoy offered refunds for the missed showing and the theater was able to procure another copy of the film from Britain in about three days time.²⁸

The *Irish Times* described the film as follows:

‘Ypres’ is a very remarkable picture which must make a deep impression on all who see it. To sit through the scenes of Paschendaele, for instance, unmoved and without a thrill a spectator would require to be made of something different from flesh and blood. The men who make the representation of these dreadful scenes of human slaughter are in nothing theatrical. The power of the machinery of war and chemistry is realistically presented. The men who face it hold all the attention of the audience, sometimes vociferously applauding, at other times dumb with horror. The whole epic story is told—the coming of poison gas, Hill 60, the tanks, and the victory. One generous note of tribute to the bravery of the foe is indicative of the spirit of the story. The film shows four or five German soldier round a machine gun, which they continue to work until they are crushed beneath an advancing British tank. The story closes with the statement that the Army passed on, but Ypres still had its garrison—a garrison only to be awakened by the Great Reveille.²⁹

The *Irish Times* makes no mention of Irish soldiers who fought in the war, nor does the paper attempt to relate the film to the Irish war experience. Furthermore, no mention is made that any Irishmen even fought at any of the battles at Ypres, yet republicans chose to view the film as a piece of political rhetoric and a jingoistic threat.

²⁷ *Irish Times*, 17 November 1925.

²⁸ *Irish Times*, 13 November, 14 November, 16 November 1925.

²⁹ *Irish Times*, 13 November 1925.

The motivations for such a display of opposition by republicans were numerous. The Boundary Commission had just released their report in early November 1925 and tensions ran high as republicans felt threatened by the possibility of losing additional territory to the north. In this atmosphere republicans would likely view the screening of a film about the First World War in Ireland as a jingoistic and antagonistic event. The fact that a British company distributed the film, and so quickly replaced the stolen copy, potentially increased the perception that it was a piece of British propaganda. Further, based on the description of the film in the *Times*, the British were clearly depicted as the superior force, dramatically emphasized by the image of a tank crushing a German machine gun post. So although the point was certainly made that the British suffered during the battle, the ultimate message seemed to be that despite a variety of setbacks Britain would triumph over their opposition. Given the historic relationship between Ireland and Britain it would not be surprising for Irish republicans to extrapolate this idea to the current geographical and political situation in Ireland. Finally, the extreme aggression and violence utilized in this crime demonstrates the degree to which republicans feared the film as a threat to their conception of the Irish state and Irish identity.

While the goal of the film theft was obviously to inhibit showing the film in Ireland, these events instead generated considerable publicity for the film. Not surprisingly, this resulted in a dramatic increase on the public demand to see the film. The Masterpiece Cinema scheduled screenings of the film twice a day from 12-21 November. The showings were each to full house with long lines of eager filmgoers

hoping to see the film, some of whom had to be turned away because demand exceeded the theaters seating capacity.³⁰ Ultimately, the controversy and publicity produced from the theft meant boosted the film's impact in Dublin.

The failure of the original robbery plan and the success of the film likely influenced republican elements in Dublin to escalate their opposition to the film and its promoter. On Friday, November 20, a group of men in a motorcar drove up to the Masterpiece Cinema and threw a bomb inside the venue before driving away. The explosion decimated the lobby of the theater and caused significant damage to neighboring buildings and businesses as well. Ironically, the bomb destroyed the Cinema's entrance and vestibule, but did not damage the actual theater. Nevertheless, the Masterpiece would be closed for several weeks to make repairs. The film "Ypres" also emerged from the bombing unharmed and arrangements were made to move showings for the following week to the La Scala Theatre in Dublin, which signified an extension beyond the original end date for the film on 21 November. The cost of the damage was estimated at £2,000 for the Masterpiece, including lost revenues, and £5,000 for other buildings in the area.³¹

The bombing of the Masterpiece constituted a significant escalation in republican violence and aggression toward the culture of the First World War in Ireland. Reports of the bombing do not mention anyone hurt in the initial blast, however, the *Irish Times* did mention an ex-serviceman who lived near the crime scene and was awakened by the blast. In the confusion, the man thought he was back at the front and waited for

³⁰ *Irish Times*, 13 November, 14 November, 16 November 1925.

³¹ *Irish Times*, 21 November, 26 November 1925.

responding machine gun and artillery responses to the initial blast. When none occurred and the man realized where he was, he simply went back to sleep. However, the inclusion of this man's account of the evening is an interesting editorial decision and draws an implicit parallel between the futility of the destruction of the war and republican attempts to stop the public display of material relating to that conflict. Two Dublin police officers were shot and wounded by the bombers as they fled the bombing. Both guards were armed, but were fired upon without provocation – Guard John Murphy was shot in the abdomen, and the bullet went through sideways and hit his left forearm; Guard William Timmins was hit in the right forearm. Three men fled the second crime scene and Timmins called an ambulance for Murphy, who was hospitalized in serious condition. Several suspects were apprehended in relation to these crimes and Charles Ashmore and Thomas Merrigan were charged with conspiracy to commit murder of two police guards, discharging a mine in the Cinema, and endangering life; both men were remanded into custody.³² While republican elements in Irish society were clearly hostile to the war and the culture surrounding it, prosecution of the men who committed these crimes does not connote tacit approval of the Great War by the Free State government. Prosecutors understandably took umbrage with these crimes because they disturbed the peace, and in the case of the bombing involved significant injury to people and property. If these crimes went unpunished, they would likely have generated more publicity for the ex-service community than had already occurred.

³² *Irish Times*, 26 November 1925.

Another area where the British Legion and other ex-service groups tried to foster a sense of community was through formal dances. Dances were even more popular than concerts throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Much easier to coordinate than national or even regional events, dances provided an opportunity for members of the ex-service community to come together with their civilian neighbors at the local level. Poppy Dances, like those in Cork described in Chapter One, proved popular in Ireland, but November was by no means the only time during the year that the branches of the British Legion hosted this type of event. Many local Legion branches possessed their own meeting halls where dances took place; many Legion halls also had a liquor license. Naturally, music was a centerpiece of these events, although songs dealing with the war would have been out of place. Local bands often provided the music at dances where upbeat, contemporary music was the order of the day. Two of the most popular and long-standing dances hosted by the British Legion took place in Dublin. One was the annual New Year's Eve dance, often taking the form of a *bal masque*, and the second took place during the summer at the annual Dublin horse show. Both events established the Legion as a fixture of their respective accompanying festivities throughout the inter-war period and for many years afterward.³³ Because some of the folk songs during this period did not celebrate the legacy of the war and marching songs were only appropriate for certain occasion, when the ex-service community utilized music during planned events there was less focus on the lyrical content and more on the nostalgic aspects of particular compositions to bring people together. Legion sponsored dances became a consistent

³³ News items on these events appeared annually, for example, *Irish Times*, 7 July, 1928, 31 December 1932.

occurrence throughout Ireland during the interwar period, providing exposure for the Legion and the ex-service community that prevented the general public from forgetting about Ireland's role in the Great War. Granted, this sort of publicity may not have converted a large number of people into sympathizers, but that was not necessarily the goal of these events. Instead, dances and similar functions provided Great War veterans an opportunity to come together and demonstrate their solidarity as a distinct sub-culture within Irish society. Similar opportunities rarely existed in the south outside of this community as veterans faced the difficulty of a strong counter-narrative controlled by state politicians, administrators, and institutions that retained a significant amount of influence over Irish culture. Significant resistance to Ireland's Great War veterans and the memory of that conflict existed in popular culture as well, as evidenced in the republican response in song and to films. While dances contributed to a counter-narrative to the developing republican Irish identity, at the same time they did not need to be overtly political in order to serve the needs of their constituents and to sustain their common bonds.

Catering to the needs of veterans was an important task, but the British Legion also took steps to provide entertainment for the entire family. The Dublin area hosted a number of fetes and fairs that allowed ex-servicemen to include their families in the development and maintenance of the ex-service community. In 1926, the British Legion hosted a fete at the Curragh Camp that included boxing, golf, and dancing competitions, a music program (performed by the Legion Band), films, and a gymnastics demonstration. The event was geared toward entertainment for the entire family and put on for the

benefit of ex-servicemen and their families in the area.³⁴ Similarly in Dublin, fairs benefiting ex-servicemen and their families occurred on occasion during the interwar period. A fancy dress carnival, complete with music, dancing, and prizes took place in Kingstown, in 1928 under the direction of the Dun Laoghaire branch of the Legion. That same year the Donnybrook Fair took place on Lord Iveagh's Grounds in Dublin.³⁵ It should be noted that the Guinness family held the Iveagh peerage, and the Guinness Corporation and family were great supporters of British ex-servicemen in Ireland, opening their property for use by the Legion on many occasions in the interwar period. Often Women's Sections of the Legion had a hand in organizing this sort of event for the dependents of ex-servicemen. Since its inception the Donnybrook Fair was a weekend-long affair, complete with sports, various competitions, and games for children and families.³⁶ In another move to care for the children in the ex-service community the Metropolitan Branch of the British Legion in Dublin initiated a program in the late 1920s where they gave presents to widows and dependents of ex-servicemen during the Christmas holiday. Other branches in Dublin and throughout Ireland took up this sort of event, which could take place on or around New Years Eve, depending on the branch involved. In 1930, the Central Dublin Branch provided entertainment and gifts for over 100 children, while the same year the Waterford Branch accommodated over 200.³⁷ In

³⁴ *Irish Times*, 2 September 1926.

³⁵ *Irish Times*, 12 April 1928; *Irish Independent*, 12 April, 8 June 1928.

³⁶ *Irish Independent*, 11 June 1930; *Irish Times*, 25 May 1938.

³⁷ *Irish Times*, 30 December 1931; *Irish Independent*, 4 January, 30 January 1930.

addition to giving gifts, dancing competitions and music were standard forms of entertainment at these functions.

Dances and fairs were important for several reasons during the interwar period: they promoted the cause of the British Legion and brought visibility to the organization; they provided a means to raise money for the British Legion's benevolent fund to be used in Ireland; and, by organizing events with wide appeal, they helped to engage the general public with the community of ex-servicemen in Ireland. The Legion advertised these activities to the general public in local and national newspapers.³⁸ In other words, the British Legion functioned as a vehicle for social life in the ex-service community by catering to their members' needs in myriad ways. Not only did these activities help to keep the organization vital and relevant, but they developed shared experiences among Irish ex-servicemen that acted as the glue holding the community together. Clearly, with the variety of post-war activities, the British Legion did not rely solely on the bonds formed during combat to sustain their members and their organizations. Legion activities generated new relationships within the ex-service community and also offered demobilized men ways to transition into civilian and familial roles as husbands and fathers. While the British Legion encompassed many aspects of life for veterans of the British army, it was not the only option for engaging the ex-service community.

When the Irish regiments in the British army were formally disbanded in 1922, old comrades associations became an additional means for ex-servicemen to maintain the relationships forged in battle and to revisit the camaraderie of military service during

³⁸ *Irish Times*, 26 May 1928, 8 June 1928.

peacetime. Unlike the elements of popular culture discussed hitherto, meetings of old comrades associations were, generally, only open to ex-servicemen. Not all Irish regiments had old comrades associations, but many of them did. Ex-service organizations were not limited to the Irish regiments either; a number of private groups maintained ex-service associations that met regularly and hosted reunion dinners. For example, in Dublin the Bank of Ireland ex-servicemen and in Belfast the Post Office Ex-Servicemen Association fit into the category of private groups without affiliation to an Irish regiment.³⁹

One of the most visible private old comrades groups was the Queen's University Belfast Service Club. There were enough ex-servicemen from Queen's that they were able to hold annual dinners starting in 1919, and received a great deal of coverage in the Belfast press. Representatives from the Queen's University Belfast Service Club were a mainstay of Belfast's war commemorations throughout the interwar period. The Queen's Service Club conducted its reunion dinners in much the same way as other associations, including its "sister" group at Trinity College, Dublin. Queen's' relationship with Trinity not only demonstrated a strong connection between Ireland's two premier educational institutions, both of which catered to Protestants, but also implied solidarity between like minded institutions in the north and the south. Functioning in a different cultural milieu, Trinity's ex-service group undoubtedly included loyalist, unionist, and constitutional nationalist elements. Therefore, what emerges is a bond that implies a degree of cooperation among these minority conceptions of Irish identity. The success of the Queen's Service Club was tied to the University's Officer Training Corps, which

³⁹ *Belfast Telegraph*, 12 November 1927; *Irish Times*, 14 November 1931.

remained in place after the First World War and ensured strong future membership, as well as the socio-economic status of many of its members. The connection between the university and the British Army also contributed to the evolving Northern Irish identity by showcasing both the historic and present commitment of Ulster's educated elite to the crown. Whether these men were career military officers or educated professionals, the advantage of having attended Queen's put them in a more stable economic position than many other such individuals. Therefore, while it seems apparent that many more of these private ex-service organizations existed, few would have had the pedigree and resources of the Queen's Service Club, and with scant coverage in the local press it remains unclear as to how many individuals were involved with these other groups or how long they continued to exist.

More commonly old comrades associations directly affiliated with former Irish regiments in the British Army. The following Irish regiments maintained an old comrades associations at some point after the war: 36th (Ulster) Division Officer's Association, Royal Irish Fusiliers, 14th Royal Irish Rifles (Young Citizen Volunteers), North Irish Horse, 10th Royal Irish Rifles, 11th Battalion Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers; 10th Battalion Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers; Royal Munster Fusiliers, 8th (King's Royal Irish) Hussars, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, 1st Cadet Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers, Royal Irish Fusiliers (Dublin Branch), Old Contemptibles Association (Dublin Branch), Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers (Dublin Branch), Royal Irish Regiment, and the 5th Royal Irish Lancers.

The amount of organization that went into maintaining these groups and the type of work they did vary widely. Some old comrades associations held regular monthly

meetings, operated their own benevolent funds, and orchestrated their own fundraisers. Naturally, the number of dues-paying members was one of the greatest factors influencing an old comrades association's ability to reach out to its constituents, and membership varied significantly for different groups. A number of Irish regiments had sister branches in Britain, such as the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, and the Royal Munster Fusiliers, the later of which had 466 out of 926 members living in Ireland as of June 1929.⁴⁰ Dues for the Munsters amounted to five shillings for officers and one shilling for other ranks, however, an individual could become a lifetime member by paying ten years worth of membership dues in a single payment.⁴¹ Payment options for the 1st Cadet Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers Old Comrades Association were even easier since the group had a flat one-shilling subscription rate.⁴² In terms of membership and outreach old comrades associations suffered a similar dilemma to that of the British Legion. The deplorable economic situation of many ex-servicemen in Ireland made it difficult for them to pay even the most nominal dues. Those groups with benevolent funds often found themselves unable to help every one in need because of a lack of funds.

Nevertheless, ex-servicemen who were able to join an old comrades association enjoyed camaraderie unavailable anywhere else in Ireland. Surely the highlight of any association's calendar was the annual reunion dinner. These dinners did more than provide an arena for ex-servicemen to reconnect with their brothers in arms; they helped

⁴⁰ National Army Museum, London (Hereafter NAM), 2005-02-10-2, Mss membership book for Royal Munster Fusiliers Old Comrades Association, n.d.

⁴¹ NAM 1976-03-78, Papers of H. B. Holt, Revised Rules Booklet, n.d.

⁴² *Irish Times*, 28 May 1930.

to foster the memory of the war, to reiterate the sacrifice of their fallen comrades, and to disseminate information relating to the association and the status of ex-servicemen in Ireland. Most associations followed the lead of the British Legion in eschewing any sort of political position. While individuals within the ex-service community were elected officials in the Dáil and issues affecting the ex-service community were sometimes discussed, these groups did not push a unified political agenda.⁴³ The features of these reunion dinners were fairly consistent across old comrades associations in both Northern and Southern Ireland. Generally the evening began with dinner, which was followed by a series of speeches and toasts, during which the leaders of the association reminisced about the regiment's wartime experience or recalled particular feats that brought honor to the regiment. Frequently there would be one, if not several, distinguished guests who were given the opportunity to speak as well. While the speeches and toasts were delivered, oftentimes the group would send a telegram to the king pledging the continued loyalty of the regiment, which the king always graciously accepted. This practice was not only limited to old comrades associations in Northern Ireland, but held true for many reunion dinners in the Free State as well. Those associations with sister branches in Britain would exchange telegrams wishing each other a pleasant evening of festivities as well.

⁴³ Some of the more prominent veterans of the First World War who served in the Free state government include, Bryan Cooper, who served as an independent until 1927 and as a member of Cumann na nGaedhael thereafter. Capt. William Archer Redmond, son of John Redmond, served as a member of Cumann na nGaedhael, as an independent, as a member of the National League. Sir Bryan Mahon and Sir William Hickier both served as senators, but claimed no party affiliation. All of these men advocated for the Irish ex-service community, but their presence in the legislature did not correspond to an organized electorate of Irish ex-servicemen.

While these events shared many format similarities, the ideas and views espoused in the course of their proceedings reinforce the relationship between the ex-service community and emerging types of Irish national identity. In Derry, in 1935, a meeting of the old comrades of the 10th Inniskilling Fusiliers presented Captain James Wilton, a former member of the regiment, with a silver salver “in appreciation of the honour that had been conferred on him, and, incidentally, on themselves, by his election to the office of Mayor of his native city.”⁴⁴ Wilton was a member of the Ulster Unionist party and his electoral victory not only spoke to the place of unionism in Derry, but the dinner with his former military comrades showed a wider acceptance of the relationship between military service and Northern Irish loyalty to the United Kingdom among Derry’s ex-service community. The evening’s festivities ended with everyone in attendance singing “God Save The King,” the national anthem. At a meeting of the 14th Royal Irish Rifles association in 1927, a flag that “bore the Union Jack and white stars representing the Six Counties of Northern Ireland” was brought to the dinner. That particular banner had accompanied members of the old comrades association to France and Belgium earlier in the year when a number of members visited locations where the battalion served during the war.⁴⁵

Speeches and toasts at old comrades association events provide a view how these groups viewed themselves in relation to their native country. At most reunion dinners toasts were proposed to the king, the fallen, the regiment, and to the evening’s guests, if

⁴⁴ *Londonderry Sentinel*, 12 November 1935.

⁴⁵ *Belfast Telegraph*, 12 November 1927.

any attended. Tributes to dead comrades varied at different associations; a toast and period of silent reflection was the most common. Some old comrades associations, such as the 14th Royal Irish Rifles, augmented this practice with a more symbolic gesture of “a vacant seat, draped with crepe, [that] occupied the place of honour besides the chairman as a mark of respect and sorrow for those who had fallen.”⁴⁶

In southern Ireland, it was not out of character for old comrades associations to toast “The Irish Free State.” At the first annual reunion dinner of the 8th (King’s Royal Irish) Hussars, made such a toast and Captain William Redmond, T.D., was on hand to respond to the toast as well. Redmond stated his hope that Irish ex-servicemen in the Free State “would prove themselves as good citizens of their country as any other class of that community.” Redmond continued, stating, “I believe...that they are, and have shown themselves to be, good Irishmen, and I hope that in the future of the Free State they will always be treated as such.”⁴⁷ Clearly, members within the ex-service community in the Free State and members of British Legion leadership, like Redmond, Major J. J. Tynan, Sir Bryan Mahon, and Sir William Hickie, all of who were in attendance at the Hussars’ reunion, did not question their claim as Irishmen. Irish ex-servicemen recognized their historic connection to the King and the British Empire, by maintaining pride in their military service and sacrifice. At the same time, membership to an old comrades association implied an understanding of the connection between military service, patriotism, and dedication one’s country. Additionally, active participation in an old comrades association provided ex-servicemen an opportunity to declare publicly and

⁴⁶ *Belfast Telegraph*, 12 November 1935.

⁴⁷ *Irish Times*, 21 March 1927.

remind the rest of the country that they, too, were war heroes. By that measure, Irish ex-servicemen of the Great War understood their service in the British Army as one of several factors contributing to Irish independence. Therefore, as citizens of the Free State a pledge of fidelity to an independent Ireland on the part of ex-servicemen did not reflect an incongruous Irish identity. The toasts at reunion dinners show that Irish ex-servicemen possessed a strong sense of pride in their past, but also maintained a similar recognition toward the current and future state of affairs in Ireland and their status within that polity.

Following the speeches and toasts, a musical program capped off the evening replete with community singing of old battlefield marches and popular war tunes, and more formal musical entertainment, both instrumental and vocal. Many old comrades associations chose to have their annual dinner reunion near Remembrance Day, but others chose dates significant to the regiment. The Old Contemptibles Association held their dinner in August near the anniversary of the Battle of Mons in 1914, while the Dublin branch of the Royal Irish Fusiliers held their “Barossa Night” in early March in honor of the battle where the regiment first gained distinction.⁴⁸

Old comrades associations had other functions beyond holding an annual dinner. Accounts from Remembrance Day services in Dublin and Belfast show that representatives from virtually every old comrades association in Ireland attended these ceremonies, thus expanding the public image of the ex-service community to show the vitality of groups other than the British Legion. Because the Irish regiments each had unique battle experiences they possessed an array of commemorative dates. For example,

⁴⁸ *Irish Times*, 6 March, 18 August 1931.

the Royal Munster Fusiliers held a mass every April to commemorate “Gallipoli Day” and members in London, Cork, Tralee, and Limerick took part in their respective towns.⁴⁹

Membership in an old comrades association brought with it practical benefits as well. Benevolent funds established by associations provided these groups with greater accessibility to philanthropic endeavors. For example, the Dublin branch of the Royal Irish Fusiliers Old Comrades Association dispersed over £3,200 to widows and dependents of former members in its first eight years of existence. Appeals were also made to members with jobs to try to procure the same for unemployed members.⁵⁰ In terms of finding employment smaller old comrades associations had an advantage over the British Legion, which made unemployment relief a major priority (see chapter four), because with fewer members those in need of work utilized connections within the association to find work. While the potential employment network of a given old comrades association may have been smaller than that of the British Legion, unemployed members of the association had someone to vouch for them and faced less competition for available positions within member’s connection networks. Well-connected men tended to be officers with a more stable socio-economic position than many of their comrades. Access to these connections was predicated on one’s ability to remain a dues-paying member. Organizational costs made dues a necessity, a reality that prevented poorer, lower class men from joining these groups, especially when they could get assistance from the British Legion for free.

⁴⁹ NAM, 1979-10-85-1, Royal Munster Fusiliers Old Comrades Association minute book 1914-1962, 19 June 1926.

⁵⁰ *Irish Times*, 6 March 1934.

Irish regimental old comrades associations also helped to illustrate the unique experience of the Irish in the Great War. For example, the Royal Dublin Fusiliers enjoyed a bit of novelty when they were presented with a rugby football with a storied history. Prior to the regiment's assault on Beaumont Hamel in July 1916, an officer with the Dubs threw the football into No Man's Land and when the men made their way toward the German trenches the men of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers reportedly dribbled the ball the entire way. German forces pushed the Allied forces back and the football was left tangled in the German barbed wire. By November of that year, the British army had re-taken the German position and members of a Scottish regiment sought out the ball after hearing the story. Two men, Jack Kerr and Jack Milne found it and, upon learning that the Dubs had formed an old comrades association, Kerr, who had kept the ball after the war, presented the war trophy to the regiment in 1937.⁵¹ These sorts of activities kept the various old comrades associations in the public eye and helped to fortify the commemorative landscape of the First World War in Ireland by providing a sense of community and publicly acknowledging the Irish contributions to that conflict.



Taken together the aspects of the culture of remembrance of the Great War in Ireland addressed in this chapter served to enhance and reify an emergent sub-community in Irish society. In many ways the culture of the ex-service community bolstered the memory of the Great War in Ireland, and as it increased its breadth across various cultural forms and media this culture achieved permanence in Irish society that seriously

⁵¹ *Irish Independent*, 15 March 1937.

challenged the republican concept of Irish national identity. Unlike Remembrance Day activities, which republicans could anticipate because they took place around the same time every year, aspects of Great War memory in popular culture proved difficult for republicans to contest. In other words, the diffusion of Great War memory in Irish popular culture challenged the majority strand of Irish national identity on many fronts in ways that were difficult to foresee. As a result, Great War memory developed a quotidian component beyond the pomp and spectacle of Remembrance Day.

The convergence of popular culture and Great War memory in Ireland came from a variety of sources and catered to a variety of people. Clearly, aspects of traditional Irish society contributed to this commemorative culture, such as the appearance of the Great War in folk music, while British and other contemporary trends in popular culture were influential as well. This blending of cultural influences made the resultant culture accessible to a large number of people, as there were aspects that appealed to almost every taste. Along similar lines, attempts by the British Legion to create a place for families and younger generations within this cultural milieu speaks to the awareness and need to promulgate the memory of the Great War while at the same time strengthening the ex-service community at its most basic levels, the individuals and families.

Perhaps the most important aspect of all of the cultural forms discussed in this chapter was that they provided a way for Irish ex-servicemen to communicate publicly their status as members of, and heroes to their respective Irish state. Clearly a relationship exists between patriotism, heroic sacrifice, the military, and nationalism; otherwise republicans would not have made martyrs out of the executed leaders of the Easter

Rising. However, in post-war Ireland, republicans did not consider the sacrifices made by Irishmen in the Great War to have contributed to Irish independence. Therefore, by positioning themselves within a culture that embraced aspects of Ireland's past and contemporary history, Irish ex-servicemen made a case for the idea that military sacrifice to one's country could not be limited to a particular army or conflict, and that Irish participation and sacrifice in the Great War made a very real and important contribution to Irish independence.

CHAPTER FOUR
SERVICE REWARDS: HOUSING, UNEMPLOYMENT, AND EX-SERVICEMEN IN
IRELAND, 1919-1939

In August 1923, the final touches were put on the 247 homes built for Irish veterans of the First World War by the Irish Local Government Board, signifying the completion of a housing scheme almost three years in the making. Located in the north Dublin suburb of Killester, these homes were far removed from the barren gloominess of the western front, and possessed a rural serenity, replete with gently winding roads, cozy cul-de-sacs, individual yards in the front and back of each property, several community gathering places, and plenty of trees. From the street level, passers-by would see a series of brick chimneys competing against green vegetation in a race to the suburban sky. In short, the entire community epitomized the “garden suburb” ideal.¹

The Killester housing scheme was viewed as the crown jewel in the British government’s attempt to follow through with their promise to provide housing to Irish ex-servicemen from the British army. Killester “was specifically intended to represent a paradigm of the post-war policies promoted by Lord [John] French and the Castle Unionists. In the Killester Estate, the British ideological conjunction of loyalty to Empire, favouritism towards Irish ex-servicemen, technical standardisation, and garden suburb

¹ Murray Fraser, *John Bull’s Other Homes: State Housing and British Policy in Ireland, 1882-1922* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1996), 252-255; F. H. A. Aalen, “Homes for Irish Heroes: Housing under the Irish Land (Provision for Sailors and Soldiers) Act 1919, and the Irish Sailors’ and Soldiers’ Land Trust,” *Town Planning Review* 59, no. 3 (July 1988), 305-322.

planning all reached their apotheosis.”² George Duckworth, the Chairman of the Irish Sailors’ and Soldiers’ Land Trust from its inception in January 1924 until mid 1927, took a broader view and considered the provision of homes for Irish ex-servicemen to serve as war memorials to Irish veterans. Through building and maintaining homes for Irish ex-servicemen, Duckworth saw these memorials benefitting future generations as well, and suggested that the Trust’s “little settlements all over Ireland would become living, visible and more or less abiding monuments of England’s gratitude to the Irishmen who fought for her in the Great War.”³

The entire housing construction program signified a paradigm shift in the way the British government cared for military veterans. Never before had such an extensive housing campaign been undertaken on behalf of ex-servicemen in Ireland or Britain. Furthermore, the addition of housing to ex-servicemen’s benefits, which could include pensions and disability, illustrates the British government’s awareness of how bad living conditions were in Ireland. By the time housing for Irish ex-servicemen began to even be considered as a potential option in 1915, the deadliness of the war was quite apparent on both the battle and home fronts. Therefore, survivors of an unprecedented war deserved unprecedented compensation. The controversy surrounding the war and Home Rule made this situation particularly acute in Ireland. By limiting access to the housing schemes to ex-servicemen of the First World War, the entire project became a part of the memory of the war in Ireland and, as such, was subject to changing attitudes toward war veterans in

² Fraser, 249.

³ Quoted in Fraser, 263-64.

Ireland during the interwar period. After the establishment of the Irish Free State, this issue aroused considerable controversy because a general housing shortage and the lack of government initiatives to fix the problem combined to create “perhaps the most urgent social problem facing the new Free State government in 1922.”⁴

Economic conditions in post-independence Ireland exacerbated an increasingly grim state of affairs. Generally, little industrialization emerged in Ireland outside of the northeast where shipbuilding and linen were the two principle industries. After independence the Free State remained an agriculture based economy heavily reliant on exports. The government embraced aspects of free trade, making limited use of protectionist policies, but failed to improve Ireland’s weak economy. When de Valera and Fianna Fáil came to power in 1932, they put a series of economic protections in place, focusing on autarkic economic schemes, and withheld payments due to the British government, which resulted in an economic war with Ireland’s primary trading partner. Taken together, the economic war, the new protectionist policies, and the Great Depression directed the course of the Irish economy in the 1930s. Agricultural production dropped over the course of the decade, and although there was greater investment in industrial production it was not enough to revitalize the Free State economy.⁵ Lack of employment options often translated into emigration and for those who chose to stay, less than optimal living conditions. Disadvantaged because of their service in the British

⁴ Aalen, 311.

⁵ Kieran A. Kennedy, Thomas Giblin, and Deirdre McHugh, *The Economic Development of Ireland in the Twentieth Century* (London: Routledge, 1988), Chapter 2.

Army during the First World War, Irish ex-servicemen fared poorly in an already dire economic milieu.

Irishmen had been volunteering and serving in the British army for hundreds of years before the outbreak of the First World War prior to the promise of housing in exchange for military service. Heightened political tension in Ireland on the issue of Home Rule influenced many men's decision to volunteer. The Ulster Volunteer Force and Irish National Volunteers both contributed significant numbers to the 36th (Ulster) and 16th (Irish) divisions, respectively. In Ulster, men fought to preserve Ulster's place within the United Kingdom, while the Redmondite constitutional nationalists who made up the bulk of the Irish National Volunteers went off to war believing that their service would prove Ireland's worthiness of independence. Politics, however, was one of many factors that spurred Irish enlistments during the Great War, and contemporary observers were keenly aware that some men who joined at this time had little regard for politics, especially those from the lower classes. Many Irishmen simply wanted to be with their "pals" while community pressure in other areas nudged men toward enlistment once their friends or co-workers had volunteered. The British Army also provided an economic incentive for many Irishmen who had few prospects for employment in Ireland and might have ended up emigrating anyway. Given the prevalence of this situation in Ireland, the promise of housing in exchange for military service was an appealing prospect. Furthermore, military service not only meant a steady paycheck and regular meals, but it included a sense of adventure, and in some cases skill training that would enable one to

find work more easily after their stint in the military ended.⁶ Despite the array of push and pull factors motivating Irishmen to enlist in the British army, after the war Republican supporters ascribed to the Irish men who served in the British Army the label of “supporters” of British policy in Ireland whether or not they actually held those views. It was in this milieu that the British government tried to realize the goals of their housing program in Ireland. The building program faced a number of problems, ranging from the number of houses to be built, to the quality and location of the homes, to malcontent over rents. As a whole, the housing question illustrated the struggles that existed at intersection of the memory of the First World War and quotidian life in Ireland.

Housing

The origins of the housing issue lay with Major Henry Lefroy, an Irish officer in the British Army and a recruiter during the First World War. Lefroy noted that the recruiting rhetoric used in Ireland exhorting Irishmen to enlist to defend their homes had little impact because many men either had no homes or lived in sub-standard accommodations. Lefroy suggested to the Commander-in-Chief for Ireland, Sir Arthur Paget a plan along the lines of the Labourers Act, which provided modest homes at a

⁶ Peter Karsten, “Irish Soldiers in the British Army, 1792-1922: Suborned or Subordinate?” *Journal of Social History* 17, no. 1 (1983), 41; Thomas Dooley, *Irishmen or English Soldiers?: The times and world of a southern Catholic Irish man (1876-1916) enlisting in the British army during the First World War* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1995); Patrick Callan, “Recruiting for the British Army in Ireland during the First World War,” *Irish Sword* 17, no. 66 (1987), 42-56; Patrick Callan, “Voluntary Recruiting for the British Army in Ireland during the First World War (Dublin: University College Dublin, PhD Dissertation, 1984); David Fitzpatrick, “The Logic of collective sacrifice: Ireland and the British army, 1914-1918,” *Historical Journal* 38, no. 4 (1995): 1017-1030; Pauline Codd, “Recruiting and Responses to the War in Wexford,” in *Ireland and the First World War*, edited by David Fitzpatrick (Dublin: Trinity History Workshop, 1986); Philip Orr, *The Road to the Somme: Men of the Ulster Division Tell Their Story*, 2nd ed. (Belfast, Northern Ireland: Blackstaff Press, 2008). RTE put together a project covering Ireland’s involvement in the First World War using audio and video clips for their archive. Visit http://www.rte.ie/laweb/ll/ll_t12a.html to hear Irish veterans explain why they enlisted in the British Army during the war.

modest rent. Paget in turn passed the recommendation on to Augustine Birrell, the Chief Secretary of Ireland. Birrell agreed to draft a bill to be introduced to Parliament, and recruiting officers in Ireland were instructed to tell recruits that such a bill was in the works. When asked about the number of houses needed in Ireland in 1915, Lefroy recommended about 40,000.⁷ Additional support came when Field Marshal John French, the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland beginning in May 1918, issued a proclamation as part of the new recruiting initiative in June 1918. In it French stated, “We recognize that men who come forward and fight for their motherland are entitled to share in all that their motherland can offer. Steps are, therefore, being taken to ensure, as far as possible, that land shall be available for men who have fought for their country, and the necessary legislative measure is now under consideration.”⁸

Parliament passed the Irish Land (Provision for Sailors and Soldiers) Act in 1919, which provided the legal framework to begin the process of erecting the homes due to Irish ex-servicemen. Under the 1919 Act the actual power to plan, acquire, and build housing schemes fell to the Local Government Board and the Board of Works in Ireland.⁹ The bill made no provision for how many home would be built, but “any man who ha[d] served in any of His Majesty's naval, military, or air forces in the present war, and who

⁷ National Archive of Ireland (Hereafter NAI) 3/493/6/Box 1/F19, “History of the Irish Sailors and Soldiers Land Trust (Ireland), 1919-1925,” p. 5; *Irish Independent* 28 September, 1926.

Major Lefroy worked in the Royal Munster Fusiliers and Royal Irish Regiment recruiting areas, the former recruiting in the Munster counties of Kerry, Limerick, Cork, and Clare, and the latter in counties Tipperary, Waterford, Kilkenny, and Wexford, which lay in Munster and south Leinster.

⁸ *Irish Times*, 3 June 1918, quoted in Aalen, 307.

⁹ *The Law Reports: The Public General Statutes passed in the ninth and tenth years of the Reign of his Majesty King George the Fifth, 1919*, Vol. LVII (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, Limited, 1920,) 384.

satisfy the Estates Commissioners as to their fitness and suitability, in like manner as if they were tenants or proprietors of holdings not exceeding ten pounds in rateable [sic] value” would be considered for a home.¹⁰ After Ireland gained independence in 1922, control of the housing program shifted to the Irish Sailors’ and Soldiers’ Land Trust. Established in January 1924, the Trust had a five member executive board, with two trustees each from Northern and Southern Ireland, and George Duckworth, a British bureaucrat, as the Chairman.

From the outset, no consensus existed on the number of houses to be built. Henry Lefroy recommended 40,000 when first asked about the plan, but Parliament passed the bill under the assumption that the total number of houses built would be 7,600. At a time when the British Army was in dire need of troops, the government made a broad promise to provide houses to Irish volunteers where 40,000 stood as a modest estimate. Recruitment in Ireland ended with the signing of the Armistice in 1918 and the budget-minded government in Westminster drastically circumscribed the allotted number of homes at the expense of Irish veterans. Reducing the number of homes made the British government the catalyst for dissension among the ranks of Irish ex-servicemen and ease with which Westminster lowered their housing quota showed that the entire scheme was little more than a desperate wartime measure. At an average cost of £600 per house, the cost to build 7,600 homes exceeded £4.5 million.¹¹ Within a few months of the Act passing, Irish authorities had received upwards of 5,700 applications for housing from ex-

¹⁰ Ibid., 382-3.

¹¹ Fraser, 245-6, 248.

servicemen across the country. However, building progress in Ireland was slow compared to similar programs in Britain (See Table 1). By 1923, housing projects in England and Wales received 56,000 applications and of those 16,800 actually received accommodations. In Scotland, The Scottish Board of Agriculture, under whose jurisdiction the issue of housing fell, provided 1,304 new dwellings and expanded another 164 in the same period.¹² The creation of the Free State restructured the relationship between Ireland and Britain, and changed the way the housing project was funded. Once the Irish Sailors' and Soldiers' Land Trust came into effect, Parliament provided a grant to the Trust in the amount of £1.5 million to carry out the housing schemes. At the same time, back-and-forth discussions between the British, the Northern Irish, and the Free State determined that a total of 3,672 houses would be built in Ireland, with 2,626 for the Free State and 1,046 for Ulster.

Table 1: Houses built, under construction, or planned in Ireland, 1919 to 21 March 1922.¹³

	Northern Ireland	Southern Ireland
1. Number of Cottages <u>actually erected</u> by the Board of Works.	68	54
Houses at Clontarf, etc. acquired by purchase		40
2. Number of Cottages <u>in course of erection</u> by Board of Works.	380	1046
By L.G.B. (Killester)		240
3. Number of Cottages included in confirmed schemes – exclusive of figures at 1 and 2 above.	248	559
4. Number of Cottages in schemes not yet confirmed.	250	313
Total	946	2252
Total for all Ireland	3198	

¹² Aalen, 306-307.

¹³ Public Record Office Northern Ireland (Hereafter PRONI) CAB 9B/6/3, "Provision of Cottages for Ex-Servicemen under the Irish Land (Provisions for Sailors and Soldiers) Act, 1919, up to 21st March 1922."

The establishment of the Irish Sailors' and Soldiers' Land Trust by no means signaled an end to discontent over the housing projects in Ireland. All three governments agreed to the dispersal of homes in Ireland, Northern Irish advocates felt slighted in their allotment and continued to push for additional housing units in the North. Further obstacles surfaced because financial support from Westminster did not always come freely, tenants protested rents, and the Free State government, at times, impeded the progress of the Trust. Westminster asked the Free State government to contribute funds to the housing project, but William Cosgrave, the Minister for Local Government and future Free State President, stated that there was no chance of Free State funding. Cosgrave admitted that injecting money into the economy would be good for the country as a whole, but the political repercussions would be too severe because there was no similar housing plan for IRA men.¹⁴ For a large number of Irish ex-servicemen the housing situation remained unresolved and the plans that were implemented did not always ameliorate the distress of those Irish ex-servicemen fortunate enough to acquire housing through the Trust. Nevertheless, the ISSLT was an institution that, along with the British Legion, kept the conditions of Irish ex-servicemen in the public eye. Both organizations advocated for Irish veterans and their families and were a constant reminder to the general public of this relatively silent, yet sizable minority.

The mid-1920s saw a number of rent strikes by ex-servicemen in the Free State, often supported by the British Legion. Rent strikes in the Free State were organized, ideologically based, and consisted of entire communities withholding rents. Several

¹⁴ Fraser, 262.

communities of ex-servicemen in Dublin and some of the surrounding areas in counties Meath and Kildare either refused to pay rent altogether or only paid what they thought was fair.¹⁵ Central to the Irish ex-servicemen was the impact of high rents on their pocketbooks, an issue exacerbated by unemployment, and the promises of low rents at the outset of the building program in Ireland.

Tenants at Killester had already been granted a rent reduction of four shillings across the board in May 1924 on the condition that all arrears were paid. By November of that year with the help of the Irish Legion of Ex-servicemen, the men at Killester sought further reductions. Other settlements participating in rent strikes at the time included those at: Bluebell, Palmerstown, Castleknock, Clontarf, Kingstown, Dundrum, and Raheny in County Dublin; Thomastown and Edenderry in County Kildare; and Kells and Trim in County Meath.¹⁶

Tenants cited housing provided under the Labourers Acts a justification for lowering their rent.¹⁷ The Labourers Act was implemented as early as 1883 with the goal of providing homes for rural laborers in Ireland, and by the 1920s these dwellings had rents in the 1s 6d to 2s range. The quality and construction of these dwellings was significantly inferior compared to those built for Irish ex-servicemen. Nevertheless, in January 1925, the Nenagh Branch of the British Legion in County Tipperary decided to withhold rents for houses built under the Sailors and Soldiers Act, citing a lack of

¹⁵ The National Archive, Kew (Hereafter TNA) AP 1/54, Letter to G. F. Alexander, 7 March 1925.

¹⁶ TNA AP 1/54, "Applications for Reduction of Rent from tenants in the Irish Free State, to be considered at the 14th meeting of the Trust on Wednesday, December 17th, 1924, at noon."

¹⁷ Major Henry Lefroy, when first proposing the idea of providing homes for Irish recruits, suggested that the houses would be similar to those built under the Labourers Act.

employment, which suggests difficulty paying rent, and “the more favourable terms granted to occupiers of labourers cottages” as the basis for their actions. The branch sought a fifty percent reduction in the rent set the previous January.¹⁸

Lowering rates at Killester in May 1924 set a poor precedent that actually encouraged further agitation, rather than deterred it. Granted, the size of the site and the promise of paid arrears influenced the decision to grant a rent reduction, but the message to the ex-servicemen was clear; collaborative action yielded positive results. Naturally, this was not the sort of communal spirit the British Government envisioned when they first began the building program. In fact, this type of agitation against a “British” institution on the part of Irish ex-servicemen ran counter to the republican notion that these men were traitors to Ireland, and, if anything, taking a stand on the issue of rents made them more Irish in a republican Irish identity paradigm because a British institution was the object of their ire. By 1926, rents for ISSLT houses averaged six shillings per week, but that number increased or decreased in urban and rural areas, respectively.¹⁹

In an effort to alleviate the housing crisis in the Free State, the government provided incentives for builders to construct new homes. The Housing Acts 1924-26 provided government subsidies to builders undertaking construction similar to that of the Trust.²⁰ The British Legion maintained that denying the Trust access to subsidies constituted discrimination against ex-servicemen of the British Army. Furthermore, the

¹⁸ *Irish Times* 14 January 1925.

¹⁹ Fraser, 28-29, 266-7.

²⁰ See Mary E. Daly, *The Buffer State: The Historical Roots of the Departments of the Environment* (Dublin: Institute of Public Administration, 1997), 208-212.

ISSLT was taking steps toward reducing the housing shortage in Ireland, so this discrimination not only affected ex-servicemen, but the entire housing issue as well. Despite the fact that the ISSLT was an established organization charged with the exact task of building homes, the Free State argued that because the Trust had a reserve of capital that there was no need to extend them subsidy.²¹ This essentially meant that fewer homes were built and served to perpetuate the housing crisis in Ireland, not to curb it. The decision also had an economic component because fewer homes meant fewer construction jobs and less money injected into the national economy. By denying the ISSLT these subsidies the Free State government used the issue of housing to further ostracize Great War veterans from Irish society. Because the Trust build homes for former British soldiers, the Free State could not justify supporting a group that, in their eyes, had nothing to do with achieving independence. By denying access to subsidies or other government support for the Trust, ex-servicemen were framed as something other than Irish. In doing so, the zero-sum game of Irish national identity tilted further toward the republican ideal and further away from the alternative concept the ex-service community espoused.

In Northern Ireland the ISSLT was not hampered by rent strikes and was able to focus on building. Not only did building in the north progress at a much quicker rate than in the south, but also the houses were built under contracts solicited from open competition at an average cost of £575 per house. Trust houses in the North typically consisted of a living room, kitchen, three bedrooms, “plus the usual domestic offices, and

²¹ NAI 3/493/6/Box 1/F20, “Committee On Claims of British Ex-Servicemen, Report,” Proof Copy, 1928, 31.

in urban districts a bathroom.”²² By December 1926, a total of 744 houses had already reached completion since 1919. Of these, at least 257 were built in Belfast and its environs. Schemes of fifty-seven and ten houses were built at Derry and Coleraine, respectively, the two largest towns in County Londonderry.²³

Despite success in building, the Trust had problems in the North. One of the most significant and on-going issues revolved around the number of houses allocated to the North. The £1.5 million given to the Trust to build houses for ex-servicemen covered both the North and the Free State. Therefore, the rent strikes in the Free State and the monies spent on administrative costs affected construction targets for the entire island. Northern officials hoped that the 1,046 cottages allotted to the North was an absolute minimum and in the event of a deficiency of capital the Treasury would provide more money in order to reach the target number instead of simply reducing the number of houses to match the available funds. At the same time, northern officials also suggested that if they managed a surplus in their capital or revenue accounts then they would be able to build more than 1,046 houses.²⁴ In true loyalist fashion, Northern Trustees put their faith in Britain and hoped to be rewarded for doing so.

Meanwhile, in November 1927, the grievances of the Free State ex-service community came to a head and the government set up a formal inquiry into the operations of the ISSLT. Aiding Irish ex-servicemen at the time were several politicians

²² *Irish Times*, 8 November 1926.

²³ TNA AP 2/15, “Statement showing the position regarding Cottages built, under construction and pending commencement, with proposals (column 14) for the allocation of 179 Cottages remaining to be allotted to complete the 1046 Cottages authorized,” December 1926.

²⁴ TNA AP 2/15, “List of questions,” n.d.

who advocated for the community on a national level, forcing the Free State government to acknowledge and deal with the men fairly. Two ex-officers of the British Army, veterans of the Great War, and representatives in the Irish parliament (Dáil), Major Bryan Cooper and Captain William Redmond, were the most prominent and consistent advocates for Irish veterans and saw to it that the grievances of their fellow ex-servicemen received attention. Redmond, the son of John Redmond and a member of the National League, a party that sought closer ties with Britain, represented Waterford in the Dáil and was well aware of the destitution Irish ex-servicemen faced; he claimed that he received between fifty to sixty letters per week, on average, from veterans describing their current situations and appealing for help.²⁵ In calling for an investigation into Irish ex-servicemen's conditions, Redmond told his fellow deputies that:

In proposing this motion I would like the House to understand, if they will believe me, that it is put forward from no political point of view nor with the idea of making a political score. This is purely a non-party question. British ex-servicemen, numerous as they are in this country, are to be found in the ranks of, and supporters of, every political party in the country. I hope that during the course of this debate the attitude that I bring to bear upon it will be understood and followed by others. It is nothing either in the nature of a vote of censure upon the Irish Government or the British Government. My sole object is to have as soon as possible a fully representative, independent and impartial investigation into the whole circumstances of British ex-servicemen in this country. When I say British ex-servicemen, I mean Irishmen who have served in the British forces. There is no other means very well of expressing that position. When it is remembered that there are, as has been stated many times, from 150,000 to 200,000 British ex-servicemen in Ireland, and when one realises that their dependents, taking the dependents on a very low plane as three, would make the total sum of citizens of this country involved in this motion in or about half a million, I think that the House will recognise its gravity.

I make no apology to the House for bringing forward the motion; but at the same time I make no special claims on behalf of British ex-servicemen from the Irish Government. I want them to be regarded and recognised by the Irish Government of the day as Irishmen with equal rights of citizenship in this State. I ask no more and I claim no less. It is somewhat different in regard to the British

²⁵ *The Daily Mail*, 11 November 1927.

Government. These men were induced by the predecessor of the British Government and by others who agreed with them to take a certain course during the Great War. I hope that the merits or the demerits of that course will not be entered into at all here this afternoon, because that is not the question before us. They were induced to take this course by several means.²⁶

Redmond and Cooper's efforts resulted in the creation of the Committee on Claims of British Ex-Servicemen (hereafter CCBES). Redmond understood that the Free State government would always be relatively apathetic to the needs of ex-soldiers, but the fact that they regularly faced discrimination was undeniable. Furthermore, because only a fraction of the Great War veterans in the Free State belonged to the British Legion, a systematic government inquiry had the best chance of airing grievances of the unrepresented.²⁷ This Committee, charged with collecting testimonies from ex-soldiers throughout the Irish Free State, consisted of Cecil Leary, Chairman, Brigadier-General Robert Browne-Clayton, and Patrick F. Baxter; M. J. Beary was appointed secretary for the Committee. Never too far from the needs of Irish ex-servicemen, the local branches of the British Legion helped to collect testimonies and other data relating to the status of ex-soldiers to present to the CCBES.

The Committee on Claims of British Ex-Servicemen held several hearing in Ireland, including sessions in Dublin and Cork. At the Dublin hearing, Mr. W. D. McLean, a Killester resident and member of the British Legion presented evidence on behalf of the ex-servicemen there. McLean's presentation reiterated the claims that Killester residents had been making for years. He discussed the original rents and how they were beyond the means of most tenants. Exacerbating the tenants' financial woes

²⁶ Ireland, Dáil, *Debates*, Vol. 21, 16 November, 1927, col. 1397.

²⁷ *The Daily Mail*, 11 November 1927.

was the need to pay the standard utility rates to the Dublin County Council as well as a special water rate to the Dublin Corporation. Killester residents had already received two rent reductions by this point, one was an across-the-board cut in May 1924 and the other applied to the four and five-room cottages in January 1926. McLean cited the British Legion as an important advocate in attaining these concessions. Nevertheless, the current rates combined with the cost of transportation expenses, which averaged about six shillings per week, continued to put a strain on the tenants at the flagship ex-service housing community in the Free State. McLean and his neighbors took umbrage with the method by which the Trust determined rents. Despite Trust claims that the houses were built to high standards, McLean equated them to Laborer cottages with the “saving grace of a hot water supply system.” He claimed that rather than adhering to the original promise of setting an affordable rent that would cover upkeep and administrative fees, the Trust fixed rents based on comparisons with the rents levied at other public and private building schemes. When tenants spoke out against the ISSLT McLean stated that they faced reprisals for their agitation and some received eviction threats for the smallest infractions.²⁸ The records of the ISSLT show little support for eviction claims, but the possibility exists that such threats did not originate with the top administration and remained localized.

As the issue of rents raged for those who already occupied Trust housing near Dublin, the dearth of housing emerged as a major concern in Cork. The CCBES session in Cork City took place on 22 March 1928 and included appearances by British Legion

²⁸ NAI 3/493/6/Box 1/F6, Statement by W. D. McLean, 3 May 1928.

representatives from the city branch and others from throughout the county. The British Legion in Cork chose not to address disability pensions, emigration, and unemployment because their grievances fell in line with those already presented by the Legion in Dublin. That left housing as one of the major issues and the Legion claimed that the ISSLT failed the men of Cork more than any other area of Ireland. Cork's contribution to the British Army during the war numbered about 12,000 for the county and 6,000 for Cork City.²⁹ By 1928, the Legion estimated Cork's ex-servicemen population to be between 12,000-15,000 men, and although contemporary estimates were overinflated Cork was home to thousands of demobilized veterans. Of these men, at least 3,000 suffered destitution so great as to expect housing from the ISSLT based on the criteria for occupancy. At the time of the meeting in 1928, the ISSLT had completed seventy houses, with twenty-four nearing completion, and around an additional 100 in the planning stages in Cork. Barring added delays the minimum number of houses planned for Cork numbered fewer than 200 for several thousand worthy tenants. The Legion presented the case of one such veteran, a man with 100% disability and six children who lived in a one room cottage as an example of the type of men who should receive priority in Trust housing.

After hearing all the evidence the CCBES compiled a report, which was published in 1928. The Committee estimated 150,000 ex-servicemen resided in the Free State and that they "are distributed through all classes of the community and nothing was brought to our notice to suggest that such ex-Servicemen form a class with grievances or

²⁹ Donal O Drisceoil, "Conflict and War, 1914-1923," in *Atlas of Cork City*, John Crowley, Robert Devoy, Denis Linehan, and Patrick O'Flanagan, eds. (Cork: Cork University Press, 2005), 285.

disabilities common to them as a class.”³⁰ Grievances received by the Committee were similar across each group of claimants such as those who voiced concerns over bad housing, unemployment, pensions, emigration, etc., but they detected no overarching issues that transcended these separate groups. Likewise, the Committee stated that the ex-servicemen’s grievances were not exclusive to that sub-community and instead were typical of many residents in the Free State. “Generally speaking, all the grievances and disabilities complained of were grounded on claims to special treatment by reason of promises given or of war services generally, or were the result of severance of the Free State Government from that of the United Kingdom.”³¹ In terms of housing, the report stated that no evidence existed that guaranteed houses for all Irish recruits who fought in the war and the authority of the British Government was never ascertained for any promises that *were* made. On the issue of rents, the Committee supported the Irish Sailors’ and Soldiers’ Land Trust. The report stated that because the Trust provided the capital funds for building they possessed an advantage over local laborer’s housing where building capital was not guaranteed. Therefore, comparing the rents of Trust houses to those of laborer’s cottages, and agitation for rent reductions actually put the Trust at a disadvantage.

Under the auspices of the Irish Sailors’ and Soldiers’ Land Trust, building continued in Southern Ireland until 1933. Trust tenants took legal action in the Free State resulting in a 1933 Supreme Court decision known as the Leggett Judgment, which stated

³⁰ NAI 3/493/6/Box 1/F20, “Committee On Claims of British Ex-Servicemen, Report,” Proof Copy, 2.

³¹ Ibid.

the Trust was in essence a charitable organization and therefore did not have the right to charge rent at all. While this decision did not stop the Trust from trying to collect rents it signaled an end to new building schemes in the Free State.³² Together, the CCBES report and the Leggett Judgment made Duckworth's belief that houses for Irish ex-servicemen should function as perpetual war memorials an impossible idea to sustain in the Free State. Veterans and their homes were caught in between apathy in the Free State and a British program that lacked the money or power to change its current trajectory. By the end of 1933, the Trust completed 2,562 houses with another 140 still under construction, for a total of 2,702; this number remained unchanged through the first quarter of 1934, by which point average rents dropped to 3s 9d per week. In Northern Ireland, Trust tenants attempted similar legal action over rent issues, but the verdict there was the complete opposite of the Leggett decision. The fallout was not as harsh and building in the North continued, where about 4,000 units were erected in total.³³

Around the same time that the ISSLT began to wind up building in the Free State, the government began to take steps towards addressing housing for the poor in Ireland. The 1931 Housing Act was passed in December 1931 by the out-going Cumann na nGaedheal government. Fianna Fáil presided over the implementation of the Act and embarked on a building program aimed at alleviating Ireland's housing problems in both rural and urban communities. In the first ten years after passing the bill "local authorities built 29,000 houses and flats plus 20,000 labourer's cottages, while private individuals

³² Ireland, Dáil, *Debates*, Vol. 88, 14 July, 1942, col. 496.

³³ TNA AP 1/154, Building progress reports for the months ending 31 December 1933 and 31 March 1934; Fraser, 271.

and public utility societies constructed 22,000 rural and 11,000 urban houses – a total of approximately 82,000 houses.”³⁴ By 1948, Fianna Fáil claimed to have built or aided in the reconstruction of 140,000 homes. While most were modest homes similar to Labourer’s Cottages, and generally of lesser quality than Trust houses, the initiative demonstrated the comparative sluggishness of Trust building and the Free State government’s continued unwillingness to support the ISSLT.³⁵

Unemployment

Along with housing, unemployment persisted as a major issue for Irish ex-servicemen. One disillusioned ex-officer wrote to the *Irish Times* outlining his woes in December 1919. This unidentified man gave up a well-paying job overseas to enlist in the British Army. He signed on with the Dublin Fusiliers and went to France where he served in the trenches and was twice wounded. He served well, being mentioned in dispatches and receiving promotions while in the field. When facing demobilization in 1919, he wrote to a number of Dublin firms to inquire about available positions all of which replied in the negative. No mention was made of possible openings in the future and he received no solicitations for other work that fit his qualifications. This ex-soldier did not seek pity or charity but simply the opportunity to prove his worth.³⁶ Quite understandably, he was disappointed by the lack of employment options, especially from loyalist firms, which were more likely to hire veterans, but this case illustrates the

³⁴ Daly, 221.

³⁵ Ferriter, *Judging Dev*, 280-282; University College Dublin Archives, P150/2756, “Fianna Fáil’s Achievements,” reproduced in Ferriter, *Judging Dev*, 294-296.

³⁶ *Irish Times*, 17 December 1919.

employment problem in Ireland after the Great War where men with skills and experience, not to mention unskilled laborers, could not find work. To make matters worse, Great War veterans came home to a changed Ireland and their chances of finding a job declined because of their military service for the British crown, especially when competing for jobs against those who did not join the colors during the Great War.

Of course, unemployment was not a new problem in Ireland. Emigration had been a safety valve for Irish men and women who could not find sustainable employment in Ireland for decades.³⁷ Following the First World War, unemployment was particularly severe for ex-servicemen. Dependency on agriculture and the lack of industrialization outside of the northeast resulted in few employment options, especially considering that most farms were smaller than thirty acres and not adequate for major commercial agriculture. According to Free State censuses in 1926 and 1936, unemployment rates dropped from sixteen to thirteen percent, but the real number of unemployed individuals increased by 17,000 over the decade. Northern Ireland faced problems of its own where unemployment hovered around twenty percent in the 1920s and averaged twenty-seven percent in the 1930s.³⁸

At the beginning of the war, many companies promised men who enlisted that they could return to their jobs after the war. Some companies, like the Guinness Brewery

³⁷ The number of emigrants leaving Ireland declined in the mid-1920s because of the passage of the US Immigration Acts in 1921 and 1924, which limited the number of immigrants allowed into the country each year. The Free State's quota decreased from 28,567 in 1924 to 17,853 in 1929. The Great Depression and Second World War further inhibited emigration. Kevin Kenny, *The American Irish: A History* (New York: Longman, 2000), 182.

³⁸ Kieran A. Kennedy, Thomas Giblin, and Deirdre McHugh, *The Economic Development of Ireland in the Twentieth Century* (London: Routledge, 1988), 99-100, 143.

in Dublin, made good on their promises, but many did not. After the armistice, ex-servicemen in Britain were given preference for most civil service jobs as well as with numerous private enterprises. In Ireland ex-servicemen had no such luck. The changing political climate in Ireland led some republicans to stigmatize veterans of the British army as traitors.³⁹ Although the official line of the Free State government tended to be toleration and such hard rhetoric did not come from official channels, the government's disregard of ex-servicemen implied a similar sentiment. Not only did the Free State government neglect to give ex-servicemen preference for civil service jobs, the state often looked the other way when ex-servicemen were openly discriminated against for jobs in the private sector.⁴⁰ In Northern Ireland, measures were taken to give ex-servicemen preferential treatment, but these were adopted several years after the war and failed to gain widespread support from the private sector.⁴¹ While the deeds of the 36th (Ulster) Division made significant contributions to unionist identity in the North, the quotidian experiences of demobilized northern veterans varied little from their southern comrades.

Without help from the government, the British Legion in southern Ireland took steps to help veterans find work. For instance, in the 1920s, the Legion maintained a list of candidates available for employment and placed them into permanent or part-time

³⁹ John Ellis, "The degenerate and the martyr: nationalist propaganda and the contestation of Irishness, 1914-1918," *Eire-Ireland* 35, no. 3/4 (Fall 2000/Winter 2001), 7-33.

⁴⁰ Brian Harding, *Keeping Faith: The History of The Royal British Legion* (London: Leo Cooper, 2001), 101.

⁴¹ Jane Leonard, "Survivors" in *Our War: Ireland and the Great War*, John Horne, ed., (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2008), 216.

work as often as possible. Potential job candidates were screened to ensure that trustworthy, efficient, responsible, hard-working men remained at the top of the list. This also meant that those men who were placed into jobs were more likely to be kept on permanently. This boded well for all ex-servicemen because businesses that were satisfied with the Legion's placement service would be more willing to take on additional men or recommend it to others. Initially the Dublin branch of the Legion was successful, placing 854 men into jobs within its first five months of existence. However, poor living conditions in Ireland meant that even men who were willing and able to work sometimes found it difficult to hold long-term positions because chronic malnourishment predisposed them to sickness, lack of energy, and missing work.⁴²

Finding work at established businesses offered one option for procuring employment for Irish veterans, but in early 1928 the Legion began investing in a different approach toward alleviating employment distress. Speaking at a British Legion meeting in Dublin, Sir William Hickie announced that, in association with three Irish gentlemen beneficiaries, the Legion was in the process of acquiring premises to set up a factory that would only employ Irish veterans. Household furniture and other woodworking projects would be the order of the day at the factory. By November 1928, 12,000 square feet of factory space was up and running in the Ballsbridge area of Dublin. Approximately thirty Irish ex-servicemen were employed there, most of whom had been wounded during the war, and the factory offered a wide array of goods and services. Not only did the factory specialize in making woodenwares, but it also provided repair services for broken or

⁴² Harding, 101.

damaged furniture. Men not engaged in furniture-building spent time making raffia table mats, household ladders, and metal flower stakes and binding rings, which were marketed toward gardeners. Tradesmen at the factory were paid union rate wages, and the other men were paid according to their abilities. Furthermore, the factory directors kept an eye to the future as they planned to build a storefront for the factory to display their wares, to begin the manufacture of baskets, trunks, and attaché cases, and to obtain a sales stall at the Royal Dublin Society's Horse Show.⁴³ Employment projects like the one at the Ballsbridge factory represented a direction the Legion hoped to pursue in the future. Availability of capital and investors drove the development of these types of schemes, and the Legion acknowledged that progress in this type of grassroots initiative would take time. Yet, the success at Ballsbridge gave the Legion hope and the Area Council advised the branches to assess local working conditions and to forward any strategies for employment, even if they were simple plans that would benefit a small number of individuals, to the Area Council.⁴⁴

Given the unstable political situation in the south during the Anglo-Irish and Irish Civil Wars, unemployment woes for Irish ex-servicemen come as little surprise, but in the north many men faced the same challenges despite a completely different social and political climate. The Northern Area of the British Legion kept their finger on the pulse of men's work situations. At the fourth annual meeting of the Northern Area of the Legion, Captain J. L. Bennett, Council Chairman of the Northern Area, spoke on the

⁴³ *Irish Times*, 20 November 1928.

⁴⁴ *Dublin Chronicle*, 2 March 1929.

issue of unemployment stating that the Legion lacked a panacea for unemployment, but that it was actively engaged in “suggesting certain lines of action whereby distress can be reduced.” Bennett stated that many ex-servicemen and their families lived on the dole, which was less than ideal because of its “demoralizing effect” on “good fellows,” and belied the idea that veterans would return to a “land fit for heroes.” Ex-servicemen preferred actual employment to government assistance and the Legion was committed to helping develop a national solution to the problem. Bennett clearly understood the idea of a “national” program as one that functioned within, and was confined to the North. For instance, “[t]he Legion was of the opinion that some form of compulsory employment of disabled ex-Service men should be introduced.”⁴⁵ Such a scheme would ensure that those with the greatest need received necessary relief and assistance. At the same time, this type of plan would free considerable funds in the British Legion’s coffers, enabling them to extend the breadth of their assistance in Northern Ireland. But when a proposal went before the Northern Government it was rejected, much to the frustration of the Belfast Legion. Colonel Philip Woods, who was responsible for sponsoring the bill, saw its rejection as a hypocritical move on the part of northern legislators. Support for the ex-service community did not simply come through attending war memorial dedication ceremonies or paying lip service to survivors, but via measures that made a real impact on the lives of northern veterans.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ *Irish Times*, 31 March 1925; *British Legion*, vol. 4, no. 11 (May 1925), 387.

⁴⁶ Royal British Legion, Belfast (Hereafter RBL) “Minutes of the monthly meeting of the finance & general purposes committee,” 23 August 1927; *Irish Times*, 24 May 1927.

In Northern Ireland, some of the British Legion's initiatives achieved success toward alleviating unemployment. One of the most unusual employment schemes came from the Belfast Legion branch, which proposed a plan to the Area Council where members would raise rabbits for fur production.⁴⁷ However, the most successful employment scheme came to Belfast when the Northern Area Council established a valet service. Originally conceived of by the Legion branch in Glasgow, Scotland, the Northern Ireland Area Council approved the adoption of a similar business model in the fall of 1927 and provided £100 in start-up money after meeting with a representative from the Glasgow Legion branch to discuss the viability of the plan. By March of the following year the British Legion Car Attendants (Belfast) Ltd. employed seven disabled ex-servicemen. The company quickly expanded and within a mere eighteen months employed over forty ex-servicemen and operated out of all of the city's parking lots as well as many nearby seaside resorts. The Belfast Car Attendants scheme was one of many in the United Kingdom and took advantage of the rise of the automobile. The operation appealed to the Legion for several reasons. First, the work required no training (assuming one knew how to drive a car), which made it ideal for disabled and older veterans who had difficulty finding work. Second, the valet service was a public and visible operation, which helped boost the image of the Legion. Attendants wore uniforms and were responsible for parking and monitoring the automobiles in their assigned lots. The Legion did not charge for the service, instead relying on donations, which patrons

⁴⁷ RBL Belfast, "Minutes of the monthly meeting of the finance & general purposes committee," 23 August 1927.

gave willingly. Workers' compensation was quite low, but they were eligible for weekly bonuses and given appropriate insurance.⁴⁸

Meanwhile, efforts to combat unemployment in the Free State could not keep pace with the demand for work, and the ex-service community included the issue in their grievances presented to the Committee on Claims of British Ex-Servicemen. When the Legion addressed the issue of unemployment for Irish ex-servicemen at the Dublin sitting of the CCBES they did not contest the sheer difficulty men faced in procuring jobs, as Irishmen throughout the Free State of every background faced the same struggles. A weak Irish economy made everyone's lives hard. Yet, the Free State government granted financial assistance to local authorities to fund relief schemes, and when it came to filling the positions in these relief schemes ex-soldiers received preferential treatment, but this was only extended to veterans of the National Army and not those who had served in the British Army. The Legion acknowledged that "there is no discrimination against British ex-Servicemen who are Irish citizens in connection with employment on Road, Relief, etc., Schemes, but alleged that in the choosing of men for labour locally, there was often discrimination by the foreman of the works against British ex-Servicemen."⁴⁹ Therefore, the Legion did not challenge the government's strategies for combating unemployment, but rather with the hiring policies associated with these schemes. The Legion sought to have preferential selection for available positions extended to all ex-servicemen including

⁴⁸ RBL Belfast, "Minutes of the monthly meeting of the Area Council," 11 October 1927; Harding, 88; Niall Barr, *The Lion and the Poppy: British Veterans, Politics, and Society, 1921-1939* (London and Westport, CT: Praeger, 2005), 105-106.

⁴⁹ NAI 3/493/6/Box 1/F20, "Committee On Claims of British Ex-Servicemen, Report," Proof Copy, 36.

veterans of the British Army. Great War veterans “served their Country and Government of the Day when they did serve,” the Legion claimed, and deserved the same consideration for jobs as National Army veterans.⁵⁰ This also included civil service jobs because veterans of the National Army “were given exclusive access to vacancies for messengers, postmen, and other subordinate positions” and former officers fared even better, being exempt from examinations for administrative and clerical positions.⁵¹

Thomas Dooley, was a veteran of the Great War and one of the few individuals to directly address the CCBES hearing in Cork. Dooley described how he and eleven other ex-servicemen were dismissed from their civil service positions and replaced by National Army men. When the Chairman told Dooley that he was dismissed because he failed to pass an examination and the decision had nothing to do with his war service, Dooley balked at the idea that he was unqualified. He told the Chairman “My services were dispensed with because I was a British ex-serviceman. I have no doubt about that. I went to Castlecomer in 1921 and a tribute was paid to me that I was an efficient and capable officer and able to do my work. I would not have lost that employment only for the change of government that took place.”⁵² In fact, Dooley’s superiors often used him to train new employees, including those who ultimately took over his job. Of course, no one explicitly told the men that their service in the British Army was the reason for their

⁵⁰ NAI 3/493/6/Box 1/F6, “Statement of evidence to be presented to the Committee established to consider the grievances of British ex-service men resident in the Irish Free State,” 12-14.

⁵¹ David Fitzpatrick, *The Two Irelands, 1912-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 157.

⁵² NAI 3/493/6/Box 1/F5, “Statement of evidence to be given by the Cork Branch of the British Legion of Ex-Servicemen (Ireland) to the Commission appointed to inquire into grievances of British Ex-Servicemen resident in the Irish Free State,” 35.

termination. The situation, however, was common enough that it was either implied or understood and, therefore, did not have to be stated.

As with the housing issue, the findings of the Committee on Claims of British Ex-Servicemen struck a significant blow to the discrimination claims of the Free State ex-service community. The report addressed the complaint of preferential treatment for ex-Irish National Army men and the Committee found that in two different work schemes ex-National Army men accounted for 9.8% and 16.4% of the total number of men employed and that this in no way constituted a majority or even a significant preference for ex-National soldiers.⁵³ Missing from the Committee's report was the total number of British Army ex-servicemen employed at the same work schemes, an omission that skewed the Committee's findings. At the same time, the report stated that at least 658 ex-servicemen worked as temporary clerks and were kept on in their jobs during the transfer of power to the Free State government, but only 158 could still be accounted for by March 1928. In an attempt to explain the significant drop in ex-servicemen working as temporary clerks, the report stated that "[s]ome were absorbed into the permanent Civil Service of the Irish Free State through the limited competitive examination held in June-July, 1925, and some may have resigned or left the service voluntarily or by death. The number discharged is, therefore, not ascertainable."⁵⁴ Following the release of the CCBES report, the Free State government came out in support of the committee's findings,

⁵³ NAI 3/493/6/Box 1/F20, "Committee On Claims of British Ex-Servicemen, Report," Proof Copy, 10, 22, 36.

⁵⁴ NAI 3/493/6/Box 1/F20, "Committee On Claims of British Ex-Servicemen, Report," Proof Copy, 47.

stating that neither the central nor the local authorities bore any responsibility for discriminating against ex-servicemen.⁵⁵



Problems with housing and unemployment took a toll on the memory of the First World War in Ireland. In both the north and the south thousands of men lacked adequate housing and regular employment, despite various promises made during the course of the First World War aimed at alleviating these specific issues. Even those who received housing from the Irish Sailors' and Soldiers' Land Trust, and its predecessors, had trouble keeping their homes because lack of employment meant that rent often fell into arrears. Not only did these men lack material and economic comforts, they also faced social ostracism as well. Northerners were content to politicize and mythologize the deeds of their neighbors who fought in the Great War for the benefit of the Northern state and to wave their banners and bow their heads at Remembrance Day ceremonies, but this did not translate into widespread support for veteran's day-to-day needs. In a sense, the men who returned to Northern Ireland from the war were martyred in the same way as their fallen comrades, yet remained alive to witness this situation unfold. In the south, the situation was even worse. The opinions outlined in the report of the Committee on the Claims of British Ex-Servicemen effectively reduced the already dwindling power of a sizeable minority group in Ireland. This trend continued, especially after 1932, when the republican Irish national identity became increasingly dominant. Despite these challenges, the Free State's ex-service community had a few bright spots. The housing

⁵⁵ *Irish Independent*, 7 December 1929.

program in Ireland built structures that encoded elements of Ireland's physical landscape with the memory of the First World War. Furthermore, the communities that emerged within Trust operated neighborhoods, like the one at Killester, helped preserve the camaraderie first developed at the front and translated those relationships into post-war community solidarity. This solidarity, which included assistance and support from the British Legion, manifested itself in the rent strikes of the 1920s. Taken together, the issues of unemployment and housing provide a glimpse into the difficulties Ireland's Great War veterans faced in preserving the memory of their contributions in the war as well as their livelihoods once they returned home. Perhaps equally as important, is that despite divergent political climates in northern and southern Ireland, veterans on both sides of the border shared these grievances.

CHAPTER FIVE

“WALTZING” TO A NEW UNDERSTANDING OF THE GREAT WAR, 1939-1987

One Saturday evening between the end 1976 and the opening months of 1977, on the set of *The Late Late Show*, one of the most recognizable men in Irish music, Liam Clancy, approached the microphone and began a rendition of the song “The Band Played Waltzing Matilda,” a ballad that recounted the battle at Suvla Bay in 1915 from the perspective of an Australian war veteran. What might have simply been another musical performance in the long history of the *Late Late show* turned out to be what host Gay Byrne considered one of the most transcendental moments during his more than thirty-five years as host of the program. According to Byrne, Clancy’s performance was “galvanising” and constituted a “fusion of performer, audience, people at home, and everyone in studio.”¹

How was it that a folk ballad about the First World War came to have such a significant impact on the people of a nation that had spent the previous sixty years trying to forget their role in one of the seminal events of twentieth-century Europe? The period from the outbreak of the Second World War to the Enniskilling bombing in 1987 saw drastic changes occur in the memory of the First World War in Ireland. On one side of the equation were the efforts of the Irish ex-service community, which continued the commemorative practices established before the Second World War. While the British

¹ Gay Byrne with Deirdre Purcell, *The Time of my Life: An Autobiography* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1989), 172.

Legion and the rest of the ex-service community strove to maintain the strength and structure of pre-war commemorations, they were hampered by the natural decline of their ranks as more and more men succumbed to old age in the second half of the twentieth century.

While the British Legion struggled to remain relevant and keep up their profile in Ireland, a shift began to take place slowly in how the Irish viewed their experience in the First World War. Influenced in the late 1960s by the outbreak of the Troubles in Northern Ireland, Irish artists re-evaluated the First World War and drew parallels between it and the contemporary political and military situation in Ireland. This new approach toward the Great War finally brought the memory of the Great War into the post-WWII cultural milieu. Playwrights and novelists prepared the ground for this change, which was soon followed by musicians, journalists, and academic historians. The result was a small cadre of individuals who used First World War memory to promote dialog on contemporary Irish issues. By the end of this period, the Republic began to emerge slowly from its Great War amnesia.

Great War Memory during the Second World War

Of course, the shift from apathy to acceptance was gradual. The Second World War put greater distance between the Irish identity of the ex-service community and that of the country's majority. Known simply as "The Emergency," the Second War saw the Free State embrace neutrality. Arguments for Irish neutrality were plentiful, among them was the inadequate state of Ireland's national army, the fact that the Free State had just put the economic perils of the 1930s behind them and needed to concentrate on ensuring

the continued life of the Free State. Furthermore, neutrality was the Free State's "first free self-assertion" in the international community.² Yet, just because the government declared the country neutral did not mean Irish men and women neglected to aid the war effort. Thousands joined the British army to fight and even more went to Britain to work in war industries. Like the men who volunteered to fight in the First War, the pull of adventure and the push of poor economic prospects at home motivated over 43,000 Irish men and women to enlist in the British Army over the course of the Second World War. Volunteerism for the war in Northern Ireland proved unsatisfactory in the eyes of the British military with an estimated 38,000 people (7,000 women) joining the colors between 1939-1945, suggesting a degree of war weariness in Northern Ireland left over from the First War.³ During the Second War, Irish motives for volunteering had little to do with questions of Ireland's political status as these were replaced, in some cases, with a moral imperative that disapproved of Hitler and the Nazis. Yet, the Free State again failed to acknowledge formally the role that Irish men and women played in the Second World War.

World War I commemorative exercises in Ireland, understandably, took on a reduced format during the Second War. In Northern Ireland as well as in the Free State a concern for public safety greatly influenced the changes in Remembrance Day activities during the war years. In Dublin, the large procession from the city center to Islandbridge

² Diarmaid Ferriter, *Judging Dev: A Reassessment of the Life and Legacy of Eamon de Valera* (Royal Irish Academy: Dublin, 2007), Chapter 11.

³ Keith Jeffery, "The British army and Ireland since 1922," in *A Military History of Ireland*, ed. Thomas Bartlett and Keith Jeffery (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 438.

was dispensed in favor of church parades—smaller in size and shorter routes—one each to the Pro-Cathedral and St. Patrick’s. A small contingent of British Legion representatives, numbering no more than twenty, were permitted to hold a memorial ceremony at Islandbridge where wreaths were laid and the silence was observed. Poppy collections were limited to one day, and in 1944 were no longer conducted through Poppy Depots in favor of door-to-door solicitations.⁴ The long-term effect of these developments was an increased fracturing of commemorative rituals that negatively affected the solidarity of the Dublin ex-service community.

Interestingly, the exception to the rule was Cork City. In 1939, Brigadier-General E. L. Sullivan, speaking to the ex-servicemen of Cork recognized that the coming of another war and more war dead would fade the memory of those war dead who came before. Sullivan said, “Some people say now that we have another war on these ceremonies should be dropped, but I can see no reason for it; quite the contrary. Let them continue and let us see that our comrades who gave their lives in the last war are not forgotten.”⁵ Not until 1941 did the Cork celebrations fall in line with the other major Irish cities by limiting their Remembrance Day activities to church services for both Protestants and Catholics.⁶ By eliminating the inter-religious aspects of the commemoration, the memory of the Great War in Cork became increasingly fragmented along religious lines. In Ireland, where religion is often a cultural, economic, and political

⁴ National Archive of Ireland, Department of the Taoiseach (Hereafter NAI/DT) 3370B, “Memorandum For Government. Remembrance Day Ceremonies, 1944,” 2 October 1944; Letter from George F. Fagan to Office of Public Works, 20 May 1943.

⁵ *Cork Examiner*, 13 November 1939.

⁶ *Cork Examiner*, 12 November 1940; 10 November 1941.

divider, these changes helped to erode the solidarity of the veteran community and served to further isolate Great War memory from the national culture.

Political changes in the Free State after the Second World War meant that war commemoration functioned in a different political milieu. In 1948, the Free State passed the Republic of Ireland act, which repealed the External Relations Act of 1936 and ended any vestigial legal relationship between the Free State and the British monarch. The twenty-six counties of the Free State became the Republic of Ireland in April 1949. While this achieved complete independence for most of Ireland, Britain passed the Ireland Act the same year, making partition a permanent reality by “providing that Northern Ireland would never leave the UK except by ‘consent.’”⁷ For the first time in sixteen years, following elections in February 1948 de Valera was unable to form a government and John Costello was elected Taoiseach. Costello originally showed interest in sanctioning government participation in the annual Remembrance Day ceremony, but in 1949 he, too, backed down.⁸ Old habits proved too difficult to break and the official memory of the war in the south continued to be at odds with vernacular memory there. This situation stood in contrast to the north where the two entities often worked in concert.

Great War Memory after the Second World War

After the Second World War differences in Great War commemoration between the north and the south grew more pronounced. After the war the public ceremony in

⁷ R. F. Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972* (Penguin: London, 1988), 566.

⁸ James Lydon, *The Making of Ireland: From Ancient Times to the Present* (New York and London: Routledge, 1998), 384-385.

Derry immediately returned to its pre-war form. In fact, very little changed in terms of the order, timing, or ritual involved with the Derry celebrations, with the exception that the official government representative for Northern Ireland in attendance changed on an annual basis. Representatives from the Great War regiments participated annually, augmented by veterans of the Second World War. In Belfast, the situation was similar to Derry, however, being the Northern capital Belfast was also more susceptible to Irish nationalist opposition because it featured the largest celebrations.

The commemorative landscape of the Second World War was much different than that of the first. In terms of physical monuments there was very little new construction. Additional fanfare surrounded some of the post-war ceremonies as the inscriptions on the existing memorials were updated to include the dead of the Second World War. Rather than commissioning an entirely new war memorial, most towns simply added an inscription or the dates “1939-1945” to their local monuments. The city corporations of Belfast and Derry chose the latter option. The updated inscription in Belfast was presented at the 1946 Remembrance Day ceremony, while the Diamond War Memorial in Derry did the same a year later.⁹ It also warrants mentioning that for many years the Derry Corporation discussed adding the names of the WWII dead to the Diamond War Memorial. In the end, this was never completed and even though the memorial became a place of memory for the dead of both wars, a strong connection to the Great War

⁹ *Irish Times*, 16 November 1946; *Londonderry Sentinel*, 11 November 1947; Harbour Museum, Derry, MSS 3, folder 23, Letter from March Brothers to Londonderry Town Clerk, 13 June 1947.

persisted in the memorial's design and presentation.¹⁰ In Cork, an inscription was not added to the city war memorial for the war dead of World War II until the monument was refurbished between 2006 and 2008.¹¹

More significant throughout this period was the continued decline of the Irish National War Memorial (INWM) at Islandbridge. First used in 1940, the INWM remained an unfinished project. The INWM Trustees lacked the necessary funds to finish the park according to Luytens' original plan and although the Irish government made financial overtures to help the project, with the world embroiled in war the Taoiseach felt that putting money toward a memorial would not be prudent at that time. Government interest in resuming work on the INWM diminished further after attempts were made to blow up the memorial in 1956 and 1958, likely related to an uptick in IRA activity in the late 1950s. Subsequent plans for reviving the park put forth by the INWM Trustees and the Office of Public Works exceeded the amount of available funds and Islandbridge fell into disrepair in the decades following the Second World War. At various times in this period portions of the park were leased out by the Dublin City Corporation to be used as a dump, the monuments began to crumble, a stolen car ran into one of the granite pillars caused much damage, disease destroyed the park's elms, and broken fences did little to

¹⁰ For more information on the plans concerning the Diamond War Memorial after the Second World War the best sources to consult reside in the Harbour Museum in Derry City, MSS 3.

¹¹ Information gathered from www.irishwarmemorials.ie. The site contains pdf documents detailing each memorial. The original pdf file for the Cork City War Memorial contained no mention of the WWII inscription and was contributed to the database in January 2006. By the time the file for this memorial was updated in June 2008 the memorial had undergone a complete refurbishment and included an additional inscription for the WWII dead that read, "1939-1945/When you go home,/Tell them of us and say,/For your tomorrow we gave our today."

keep out animals searching for land to graze.¹² It was not until the mid 1980s that the public, aided by Dublin journalists, took note of the decayed park, which still had not been officially opened.

The immediate post-war era introduced a number of changes to the housing program in Ireland. Despite the pressing housing needs after the First World War and all the obstacles the Irish Sailors and Soldiers Land Trust encountered, it was not long until some of the more remote building schemes in the Free State suffered from lack of available tenants. During the planning and building stages the ISSLT tried to spread out their building schemes so that veterans across Ireland would have access to Trust housing. However, with fewer veterans in rural districts once the pool of qualified local ex-servicemen tenants dried up the Trust was forced to let homes to non-ex-servicemen in order to get money for property maintenance. In Northern Ireland, the situation was different than in Eire. While the Free State branch of the Trust finished their building schemes in the 1930s, the Northern Ireland section continued building when permission, money, and resources allowed. In October 1945, the Trust in the North claimed they still had applications from over 500 qualified tenants and hoped to accommodate as many of them as possible.¹³

Given the general housing crisis in Ireland, it comes as little surprise that the ISSLT had to deal with non-ex-servicemen attempting, and in some cases succeeding to

¹² Fergus A. D'Arcy, *Remembering the War Dead: British Commonwealth and International War Graves in Ireland Since 1914* (Dublin: Stationery Office, 2007), 356-357.

¹³ The National Archive (Kew) (Hereafter TNA) AP 2/61, Meeting Minutes Irish Sailors and Soldiers Land Trust, 18 October 1945, resolution 7.

occupy Trust houses. Empty units with no potential tenants existed as early as 1927, but the Trust did not formulate a standard policy until 1931 when the Treasury ruled that non-ex-servicemen could occupy houses predicated upon the fact that they would not gain tenants rights and would relinquish their houses when an acceptable ex-service tenant was found.¹⁴ In 1937 a case was brought to the attention of the Trust whereby the widow of an ex-servicemen let her Trust cottage to a civilian, and, because there were no ex-servicemen in the area to fill the vacancy, the Trust considered allowing the man and his family to stay and pay rent, or to sell the unit to the man outright.¹⁵ This example illustrates what members of the Trust likely knew for quite some time—that once the number of Irish ex-servicemen dwindled to the point that vacancies were impossible to fill the Trust would have to sell houses to make up for the lack of tenant rents. An official policy for disposing of unwanted houses was formulated after the Second World War. Since houses were not legally available to veterans of the Second War, the best chance these men would have of acquiring one of the units was through other means. During a meeting of the ISSLT in October 1945 the matter was taken up and it was decided that once the chairman and trustees in the Free State exhausted every possible option to secure an eligible tenant for Trust housing then “the Trust shall sell, lease or dispose of the relevant cottage ... dealing with the proceeds of such disposal in accordance with Treasury Regulations.”¹⁶ Not all Trust houses were immediately disposed of and the

¹⁴ TNA AP 3/45, Minutes of Forty First Meeting of the Irish Sailors and Soldiers Land Trust, 2 June 1931.

¹⁵ TNA AP 3/45. Letter from Brown to Philips, 8 June 1937.

¹⁶ TNA AP 1/181, Item 5(d) of the Minutes of the Seventy-Ninth Meeting of the Irish Sailors and Soldiers Land Trust, 18 October 1945.

ISSLT continued to try to fill vacancies. The ISSLT wrote to Steven Grehan, a Catholic landowner, former British officer, and honorary representative for the Legion in Cork, in 1951 seeking a recommendation to fill a vacant house in Kanturk, Co. Cork. Although the man Grehan recommended did not receive the unit because he had joined up in 1935 and had not served in the First World War, which disqualified him, Grehan was duly informed that the ISSLT had, in fact, been able to find another local veteran to fill the vacancy.¹⁷ In October 1952 the British Treasury approved a scheme for the Republic that established a set protocol for selling Trust houses. By 15 December 1952 the Trust representatives in Eire had received 391 applications to purchase Trust houses (264 from male tenants and 127 from widows), of which a full 362 were deemed acceptable.¹⁸ Furthermore, it was decided that veterans of the Second World War would get first refusal of properties that came up for sale.¹⁹

In Northern Ireland the housing issue was much different. There housing construction continued until 1952. When the British Treasury approved the sales scheme for the ISSLT the proposal met a significant amount of resistance in Northern Ireland. At the center of the opposition to the scheme sat the British Legion, which pointed out that only a fraction of the men eligible for Trust housing actually received it and that several hundred men in Northern Ireland continued to wait for housing more than twenty years

¹⁷ University College Cork, Boole Library (Hereafter UCC, BL) EP/G/10.6/1258, Letter from ISSLT Director to Grehan, 13 September 1951; Letter from Grehan to ISSLT Director, 21 September 1951; Letter from ISSLT Director to Grehan, 6 October 1951.

¹⁸ TNA AP 2/64, Letter from E. G. Compton to Sedgwick, 30 December 1952.

¹⁹ TNA AP 2/61, Letter from H. A. Strutt to E. G. Compton, 14 January 1955.

after the First World War. Therefore, selling off individual properties denied these men what was due to them.²⁰ Legion agitation against a sales scheme in the North was successful and no plan was implemented there.²¹

The decision of whether to sell off Trust property illustrates one example of how the collective memory of the Great War in the North and the South continued to diverge after the Second World War. The demand for housing on the part of Northern veterans and the Trust's persistence to cater to their needs shows that Northern institutions concerned about the welfare of their war veterans possessed more clout in the North than their counterparts in the south. This is not to say that the British Legion and the ISSLT trustees in the south allowed the memory of their constituents to pass them by, but rather that the Leggett Judgment effectively inhibited their ability to be proactive for these men in relation to housing.

For the first few years after the Second World War, an influx of new veterans helped to bolster the ranks and coffers of the Legion. However, far fewer veterans of the Second World War returned to Ireland after the war, opting instead to find work in the United Kingdom. In Ireland, especially in the south, this meant that an aging cadre of Great War veterans dominated the ranks of the British Legion. As a result, Remembrance Day ceremonies in Ireland retained a strong association with the First World War, despite the inclusion of veterans of the Second War. A number of the cultural forms from the pre-war period persisted, such as the annual Legion Ball during the Dublin Horse Show every summer. Women's sections continued to organize whist drives and bridge

²⁰ TNA AP 2/64, Letter from W. Sutherland to Editor, Belfast Telegraph, 27 September 1952.

²¹ TNA AP 2/64, Letter from ISSLT to all Tenants, 21 January 1953.

tournaments. One of the biggest changes, however, was the introduction of the Festival of Remembrance in Ireland. Originally started in London in 1927, the practice was not added to the commemorative landscape of the Irish Areas of the Legion until several years after the Second World War. Perhaps most interesting is that the Festival first appeared in Eire in 1951, but a similar event did not take place in Northern Ireland until 1955. The new event took place near Remembrance Sunday and consisted of an array of activities and events, and the Festivals in Dublin and Belfast differed from the London celebrations. In London, the Festival was held at the Albert Hall and consisted of a mix of spectacle and commemoration, which included community singing, speeches by dignitaries, the two minute's silence, and, as the Festival evolved song and dance routines highlighting various aspects of military life. The BBC broadcasted the London Festival every year, and, beginning in 1950, televised it as well.²² When similar events were introduced in Ireland decades later they quickly turned into a focal point of the commemoration of the First World War for several years. Although the Festivals were new to the Irish Areas of the Legion they did little in the way of adapting the culture of commemoration to post-WWII cultural trends. Instead, the Irish Festivals followed the structure of the London festival, which relied on established cultural forms. The result was an event that appealed to those already involved with or sympathetic to the ex-

²² Brian Harding, *Keeping Faith: The History of The Royal British Legion* (London: Leo Cooper, 2001), 16, 213. The first color broadcast of the London Festival of Remembrance took place in 1970, and the following year the BBC decided to run an hour and a half edited version of the program instead of a two-hour live feed. Although the Legion protested the change, the edited broadcast got better ratings. Harding, 225, 322.

service community and failed to appeal to younger generations that would maintain the memory of the First World War.

The Dublin Festival, inaugurated in 1951, ran until 1965. Held at the Metropolitan Hall in Dublin, the general program of the Festival consisted of community singing, a concert, a formal act of remembrance, and in later years one or more films were shown. At the conclusion of the Remembrance thousands of poppy petals were dropped from the ceiling, showering the attendees with physical and metaphorical elements of memory. Slight variations occurred on a yearly basis depending on the particular entertainers scheduled to perform and available resources. The community singing portion of the program generally consisted of marching songs and other standards popular during the Great War and songs like “Pack Up Your Troubles” and others “reviv[ed] memories of the first World War.”²³ The concerts included performances by popular local musicians singing songs and contributing instrumental pieces, as well as comedic monologues and sketches. The Southern Ireland Area’s Festival of Remembrance incorporated some features unique to that area. In 1954, the Legion decided to include a number of films in the Festival program, several of which detailed the type of work done by the British Legion and a short color film of the Garden of Remembrance and Memorial Cross at Islandbridge as well as the surrounding park.²⁴ The following year one of the many forms of entertainment consisted of a demonstration of Irish dancing performed by the

²³ *Irish Times*, 5 November 1953; 2 November 1957.

²⁴ *Irish Times*, 26 October 1954.

Comerford Troupe.²⁵ In 1960, those Irish who served with the United Nations in the Congo were included in the commemorative proceedings, and in 1963 the Dublin Festival was honored with the presence of an Irish winner of the Victoria Cross from the First World War, Sergeant John Moyney, V.C. former Irish Guard from Roscrea, County Tipperary. Attendance at the Festival was consistently reported to be over the 2000 mark in the 1960s, showing that there was substantial and sustained interest in the event.²⁶ Nevertheless, after 1965 there was no coverage of the Festival in the local press. No explicit explanation was put forth in the press regarding the Festival's demise, but undoubtedly it was an expensive endeavor, and it would come as little surprise if the cost to put on the Festival eventually exceeded the amount of money it raised. Furthermore, people could simply tune in to one of the BBC broadcasts if they wanted to see a similar event, even if it lacked the nuances and particularities of the local Dublin celebration.

Northern Ireland, too, commenced the practice of holding a local Festival of Remembrance. Held at the Ulster Hall in 1956, the inaugural Northern Irish Festival of Remembrance included a replica mini-cenotaph, a church choir, regimental bands, and Old Comrades Associations and British Legion branches from throughout the province. The ceremony consisted of community singing of First World War songs like "Tipperary" and "The Long, Long Trail." Following this, the Rt. Rev. T. M. Barker said a prayer and the lights in the hall were dimmed while the "Last Post" was sounded. Then the Northern Ireland Area president, Sir Norman Stronge, read the Act of Remembrance

²⁵ *Irish Times*, 27 October 1955.

²⁶ *Irish Times*, 10 November 1960, 9 November 1961, 7 November 1963, 12 November 1965.

while poppy petals cascaded down from the ceiling on the congregants. After this buglers sounded the “Reveille” and the band played “Flowers of the Forest” before the final call, a reading of “In Flanders’ Fields.”²⁷ This general format remained consistent for many years in Northern Ireland.²⁸ The local press reported strong attendance including capacity crowds in 1962. Like the Dublin festivities, occasionally special features were added to the Belfast Festival. Celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the Battle of the Somme in 1966, thirty-five veterans of that battle attended as guests of honor, while the following year, despite a decline in attendance, the Festival honored fifty years of women’s service in the British Army.²⁹ This stands in stark contrast to the Republic, which did not celebrate the bi-centennial of any World War I event between 1964-1968, and instead openly commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of the Easter Rising in 1966, a choice that bolstered the republican element of Irish national identity at the expense of Ireland’s ex-service community.³⁰

Belfast newspapers failed to mention the Festival beginning in 1968. Coupled with rising political and sectarian tensions in Northern Ireland, the lack of coverage of the Festival in the local press suggests that the Festival may have been suspended. The

²⁷ *Belfast Telegraph*, 7 November 1956.

²⁸ The town of Larne held its own festival for a few years in 1962 and 1963, which existed as the only one in Ireland outside of Dublin or Belfast, but ultimately it had a short run and gave way to the Belfast Festival. *Belfast Telegraph*, 6 November 1963.

²⁹ *Belfast Telegraph*, 7 November 1966, 6 November 1967.

³⁰ Lingering wounds from the Irish Civil War meant that commemoration of the Easter Rising in 1966 did not enjoy universal support and was not without its critics. Nevertheless, the fact that the southern government sanctioned and was willing to proceed with these commemorations despite criticism, and the fact that the southern government did nothing to commemorate the Great War speaks to its stance toward the latter conflict. See, Mary Daly and Margaret O’Callaghan, eds., *1916 in 1966: Commemorating the Easter Rising* (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2007).

Troubles in Northern Ireland caused many Remembrance Day events to be cancelled or altered, and the Festival of Remembrance likely suffered the same fate, especially since it amassed a large number of people in one place. This meant that the people of Northern Ireland were unable to utilize their established and codified practices to remember the Great War, and instead had to make due with BBC broadcasts of the London Festival. Representatives from the British Legion in Northern Ireland attended the London ceremony and carried the standards of the Northern Area, which gained the approval of people of the Northern province.³¹ By the late 1970s the Festival returned and in 1979 it was labeled as an “annual” event, but one whose structure had changed. The first half of the Festival simply consisted of entertainment from local artists who donated their time and talents free of charge, while the second half was an interdenominational remembrance service, but with an attendance of 800, which raised £500 for the poppy appeal, the Festival of Remembrance in Northern Ireland clearly lost much of its local support.³²

In addition to the British Legion, Old Comrades Associations of the disbanded Irish regiments continued to be active in perpetuating the memory of the Great War following the Second World War. For instance, the Royal Munster Fusiliers Old Comrades Association was active until 1969. The Royal Munster Fusiliers Old Comrades Association had several branches throughout Ireland and one in London. This organization continued to have annual reunion dinners on an annual basis and to sponsor

³¹ *Belfast Telegraph*, 12 November 1970.

³² *Belfast Telegraph*, 5 November 1979.

a memorial mass in June of every year to commemorate Gallipoli Day. The Munsters also sold regimental paraphernalia to its members, which allowed them to show their loyalty to their regiment both publicly, by wearing a regimental neck tie, or privately, by sending regimental Christmas cards. The association also oversaw the upkeep of the regimental war memorial in Killarney and maintained a benevolent fund for its members.³³ As H. S. Jervis stated in the Association's annual report in 1956, "The Association proceeds on its way, as a non-Munster friend said the other day, 'an example to all Regiments having old soldiers resident in Ireland.' May this continue."³⁴ Validation for the group continued in succeeding years as well, such as in 1957 when a total of nineteen new or former members joined the association – quite a significant feat thirty-five years after the regiment was disbanded. Despite this surge in membership, little could be done to stem the losses due to dying members. That same annual report cited a drop in attendance at the annual regimental masses held across Ireland and in London.³⁵

A number of the disbanded Irish regiments came together for a joint reunion and dinner in Dublin. Held on 11 November 1958 under the auspices of the Southern Ireland Area of the British Legion, the event brought together former members of the Royal Irish Regiment, the Connaught Rangers, the Prince of Wales Leinster Regiment, the Royal

³³ National Army Museum, London (Hereafter NAM), 1976-03-78, Royal Munster Fusiliers Old Comrades Association 38th Annual Report, 1953; 43rd Annual Report, 1958.

³⁴ NAM, 2005-02-10-3, Royal Munster Fusiliers Old Comrades Association 41st Annual Report, 1956.

³⁵ NAM, 2005-02-10-3, Royal Munster Fusiliers Old Comrades Association 42nd Annual Report, 1957.

The Royal Dublin Fusiliers published public notices in the *Irish Times* in association with an effort to compile a list of surviving Dubs in 1957. Undoubtedly, new submissions would also double as a recruiting list to increase membership. *Irish Times*, 27 September 1957.

Munster Fusiliers, the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, and the South Irish Horse. Interestingly the evening's festivities began with a toast to Ireland followed by additional toasts to the Queen, the disbanded regiments, the British Legion, and the evening's guests. Forty years after the cessation of hostilities Irish veterans remained steadfastly loyal to their native country, while at the same time recognizing the British sovereign. This is a persistent mindset carried over from the interwar period that accommodated veterans' sense of both an independent Ireland and their historic link to Great Britain.³⁶

Although the Munsters' Old Comrades Association was a successful organization, time took its toll on the group. At their annual meeting on 28 June 1969, the official decision came down to disband the organization because of declining membership and deaths. In a letter to the association's members, the Hon. Secretary, A. F. Duke wrote:

Dear Member,

This is to inform you that at our Annual General Meeting held in London on 28th June it was reluctantly decided, in view of all the circumstances, to disband our Association.

This news, although very sad, will not come as a surprise to you, as it was forecast in my circular letter last February. As I said then, members need not fear that charitable grants will cease, as these will now be dealt with by S.A.A.F.A., and the British Legion in Dublin.

And although the Re-union held after our A.G.M. will be the last official one, there is nothing to stop OLD MUNSTERS from getting together in Cork, London, or anywhere else, and have a private re-union of their own.

Nor is there anything to prevent individual Munsters from attending the Annual Parade of the Disbanded Irish Regiments, held as a rule on the first or second Sunday in June, for as long as this continues.

In taking my leave of you all, I wish to convey my sincere thanks to all of you who from time to time have helped me, and (even those who haven't) my best wishes for the future.³⁷

³⁶ NAM, 1960-12-280, menu card for a dinner for the disbanded Irish regiments, 11 November 1958.

³⁷ NAM, 1979-10-85-2, Royal Munster Fusiliers Old Comrades Association minute book, 1962-1969, 1 July 1969.

While the British Legion catered to all veterans regardless of membership, the numerical discrepancy between Irish veterans of the First and Second world wars clearly tipped the scales in favor of those men who fought in the Great War. Declining membership, however, was by no means an isolated Irish problem. The Legion throughout Britain and Ireland faced continually shrinking membership rolls after the Second World War. However, Irish veterans endured harsher conditions than their British counterparts due to a weaker economy and lower socio-economic standards, resulting in a lower standard of living. These factors combined with an apathetic government, the advancing age of Great War veterans, as well as the effects and scars of battle that continued to plague many of these individuals into old age all worked against Irish veterans.

For the most part commemorative activities initiated and attended by members of Ireland's ex-service community resembled those from the 1919-1939 period. Continually changing political circumstances in Ireland eventually led to more permanent fractures in the memory of the First World War in Ireland. In 1958, six students from University College, Dublin were fined for vandalizing poppy wreaths on the war memorial at Queen's University, Belfast. The young men were in the North participating in a hurling competition and were guests of Queen's. A group of about twenty attacked the wreaths, accompanied by shouts of "Up the IRA" and "Down with Ulster." The defense for the men claimed that the youths, coming from rural areas in Southern Ireland were simply unaware of the Remembrance Day traditions practiced in the north and their actions

should not be considered a “political or party protest.”³⁸ This perception of Remembrance Day in the south further polarized the occasion in the two areas. The young men charged ranged in ages from twenty-three to eighteen, so most of them had completed at least one or more years of University. Certainly in that time it would have been nearly impossible not to know about Remembrance Day, even with its decline in the Free State. The British Legion maintained a sizable presence in Dublin and was well publicized. Furthermore, the slogans uttered by the vandals suggest that they did, in fact, believe that there was a dichotomous relationship between supporters of the Republic and supporters of Remembrance Day.³⁹ This sort of event, however, tended to be more of an aberration than a constant concern until the late 1960s.

The Troubles

Since its inception Northern Ireland possessed a Protestant majority that controlled the government and a Catholic minority that was the object of considerable discrimination and abuse. In the late 1960s, members of the Catholic minority organized a civil rights organization. This group did not propose to overthrow or challenge the existence of the Northern state, but rather to procure equal rights for the Catholic minority. Influenced by the American Civil Rights movement, Northern Catholics initially utilized peaceful means of protest, including public demonstrations and marches. These were often broken up by the police, which only served to heighten tensions between Catholics and Protestants. By 1969, the situation had escalated beyond the

³⁸ *Irish Times*, 11 November 1958.

³⁹ *Irish Times*, 18 November 1958.

control of the Northern Irish government and they appealed to the British government for military reinforcements. Militant republicans in the north operating under the banner of the IRA viewed this situation as a victory and in 1971 stepped up their campaign of violence, which claimed the lives of numerous police officers, military personnel, and civilians. By August 1971, the government in the North had had enough and reinstated a policy of internment—holding suspects without trial for an undefined period of time. The response to internment was wholly negative from the entire Catholic community, not just republicans. Regular citizens protested by withholding rents, and disengaging from public organizations, while the IRA continued to employ violence as their means of resistance. The situation came to a head on 30 January 1972, known as “Bloody Sunday,” when British troops killed thirteen people during an altercation in the Bogside, a Catholic neighborhood in Derry. In March of that year, the British government suspended the Stormont government and implemented direct rule from Westminster. The IRA campaign of violence, however, continued with a series of bombs in Belfast that killed nine people and injured 130 more on 21 July 1972. Known as “Bloody Friday,” the British military used the bombing as justification for re-asserting control over segregated Catholic areas in Derry and Belfast.⁴⁰ These years represented the height of the Troubles, but peace was far from a reality. Bombing and retribution killings continued for many years.

In Northern Ireland, the notion of blood sacrifice had long been associated with the experience of the 36th (Ulster) Division in the First World War. The casualties of that

⁴⁰ J. H. Whyte, “Ireland: 1966-82,” in *The Course of Irish History*, 4th ed., ed. T. W. Moody and F. X. Martin (Lanham, MD: Published in association with Radio Telefís Éireann by Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 2001), 289-293.

Division at the Somme sealed the relationship between Northern Ireland and Britain at a time when the political future of Ireland remained unknown. In southern Ireland, the execution of the Easter Rising leaders represented a similar blood sacrifice, but one made in the name of Irish independence. When the Troubles erupted in Northern Ireland in the late 1960s, both Catholic nationalists and Protestant unionists continued to view their losses as evidence of their dedication to their respective political views. At the same time, continued adherence to their respective political stances fueled the politics of separation in Ireland and pushed the memory of the First World War in the south further away from the republican Irish national identity. While the First World War existed as a component of shared history, the violence of the Troubles was connected to the need of the majority in both areas of Ireland to shed aspects of their shared history.

The tensions in Northern Ireland between Republican nationalists and Unionists that began in the late 1960s spilled over to affect the commemorative landscape of the entire island. Fearing IRA violence, public Remembrance Day ceremonies were cancelled in 1969 across Northern Ireland. Having such large groups of individuals who were, in theory, if not in practice, loyal to the United Kingdom gathered together created a major threat to public safety if the IRA carried through their threats of violence. Parades were quickly cancelled or banned, the number of poppy sellers dropped, and the locus of commemoration shifted from observing the silence at the local war memorial with fellow ex-servicemen across the religious and political spectrum to small, sectarian church services.⁴¹ Although these reverent celebrations allowed individuals to remember and

⁴¹ *Irish Times*, 10 November 1969.

commemorate their personal loss, the atmosphere of collectivity and camaraderie developed over the previous half-century began to fracture in the North.

The onset of the Troubles in Northern Ireland had island-wide repercussions and affected the public performance and ritual of Great War commemoration in the south, too. Initially, both Dublin and Cork continued to host Remembrance Day festivities in 1969, however, the following year Cork abandoned the parade component of their Remembrance Day ritual.⁴² In ensuing years the established Remembrance Day customs in Eire began to dissolve further. On 10 July 1971, an arson fire by “subversive elements” destroyed the Area office of the British Legion in Dublin, forcing the Legion to relocate. The Irish Sailors and Soldiers Land Trust provided an attic space free of charge until they found a more permanent location.⁴³ Nineteen seventy-one saw a repeat of the 1969 situation and this time both Northern and Southern Areas of the British Legion decided to cancel their parades in favor of purely ecumenical services. Poppy day collections in Dublin were conducted during the week leading up to Remembrance Sunday on a door-to-door basis, as was the custom, but the public sale traditionally held on the weekend was canceled. Two ecumenical services were held in Dublin that year, the usual one at St. Patrick’s and another that consisted of clergy from the Roman Catholic, Methodist, and Presbyterian Churches. The second service replaced the formal ceremony at the Islandbridge memorial. After the service, however, the Area President, Chairman, and Area Women’s section Chairman of the British Legion went to the national war memorial

⁴² *Irish Times*, 9 November 1970.

⁴³ UCC BL/EP/G/10.6/1260, Letter from Carew to ISSLT, 12 July 1971; British Legion (Ireland) memo, 10 December 1971.

and laid two wreaths on the cross of remembrance.⁴⁴ While the principle Remembrance Day service in Dublin took place at St. Patrick's since 1971, the preacher at these services was typically an ex-British Army chaplain and rotated between Roman Catholic and Protestant clergy.⁴⁵ During the Troubles, IRA threats significantly influenced the decision to reduce the scale of public commemorations, and in doing so accomplished what Remembrance Day detractors failed to do for fifty years. After 1971, the reduced commemorative ceremonies became the norm in the South.

While the politics and violence of the Troubles perpetuated the politics of separation in Ireland, the cultural response to tensions in the north initiated a different perspective. Granted, Remembrance Day celebrations and other aspects of Great War memory perpetuated by the Irish ex-service community contracted after the Second World War, a number of individuals outside the ex-service community began to re-appropriate the memory of the First War. Irish culture was almost completely void of literature, plays, or histories addressing the subject of the First World War. The problems and violence generated by the Troubles led many in the Republic to begin questioning the Pearse/de Valera/Fianna Fáil version of Irish nationalism, and by doing so they became more receptive to the idea, and existence of alternative concepts of Irish identity. By the early 1970s, in the wake of The Troubles, the Great War became a useful subject for a small cadre of Irish artists. Irish authors and musicians began to use First World War

⁴⁴ UCC, BL/EP/G/10.6/1260, British Legion (Ireland) memo, 10 December 1971; *Irish Times*, 4 November, 15 November 1971.

⁴⁵ Jane Leonard, "The twinge of memory: Armistice Day and Remembrance Sunday in Dublin since 1919," in *Unionism in Modern Ireland: New Perspectives on Politics and Culture*, ed. Richard English and Graham Walker (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1996), 103.

imagery and situations as an historical parallel to events in contemporary Ireland.

While the forms of popular media discussed below did not directly commemorate the war like the British Legion and other organizations did, the way in which they moved beyond the standard culture of commemoration to re-package the war served as a reminder to younger Irish generations that Ireland played a significant and complex role in the Great War. In this respect, these works illustrate the evolutionary nature of the vernacular memory of the Great War in Ireland. Many of these works served the dual purpose of trying to reconcile Ireland's role in the First World War and to make sense of contemporary Irish society. Taken individually, these works may appear to have a minimal impact on reversing the nationalist historical narrative dissociating the First World War from Ireland, but taken as a group they clearly demonstrate a culture reclaiming a part of its past and applying it to the issues of a new generation. Through their collective creative efforts, First World War memory moved out from the historical shadows and became a part of Eire's useable past.

The War in Popular Culture: Literature

One work of fiction that wove the legacy of the Great War into the story was J. G. Farrell's *Troubles*.⁴⁶ Published in 1970 and winner of the Faber Memorial Prize in 1971, *Troubles* was a critical and commercial success. While the First World War is, at most, an underlying theme in the book the passages relating to the war and its commemoration

⁴⁶ J. G. Farrell was born in Liverpool, England, but had Irish ancestry. *Troubles* was the first of three books in Farrell's "Empire Trilogy." Each book focused on a different British colonial holding and examined various aspects of British colonial rule throughout the world: *Troubles* takes place in Ireland; *The Siege of Krishnapur* takes place in India; and *The Singapore Grip* takes place in Singapore. A film adaptation of *Troubles* was released in the United Kingdom in 1988.

are some of the most revealing. The main character in the book, an Englishman named Brendan Archer who was a Major in the British Army, goes to Ireland after the end of the war to visit a woman named Angela Spencer whom he became engaged to during one of his furloughs. The Spencer family, Protestant loyalists, ran a hotel called the Majestic in the small town of Kilnalough in County Wicklow. Angela's father, Edward, views the British Army's role in the war as helping to defend Ireland and holds those responsible for the Easter Rising and their followers in Sinn Fein as traitors to their country. The story spans the years 1919-1921 and focuses on the Anglo-Irish war and the guerilla warfare conducted by Sinn Fein and the reprisals by the local police and British soldiers.

Farrell's story directly engages the issue of war commemoration at one point when the Major, who is trying to find a tactful way of leaving the Majestic, goes to Dublin to observe the Peace Day parade in the summer of 1919. While the Major is somewhat apathetic to the parade proceedings, he is joined in his room, which has a view of the parade route, by acquaintances from the Majestic. One of these unexpected visitors, Boy O'Neill, another ardent unionist, took great interest in the parade, identifying all the regiments as they passed and bemoaning the fact that they missed the pipers of the Irish Guards. Boy O'Neill, represents, in caricature, upper class Anglo-Irish unionist attitudes toward the war – enthusiastic, supportive, and sympathetic. The Major, however, suggested that the people celebrating in the streets ultimately failed to

acknowledge the current political reality in Ireland, stating, “Dublin was living in the heroic past. But how many of these revellers had voted for Sinn Fein in the elections?”⁴⁷

Direct reference to the war re-emerges when Edward welcomes a number of Oxford students as guests to the Majestic. Eager to discuss politics with members of England’s emerging learned elite, Edward operates under the assumption that these young Englishmen held similar opinions to his on the Irish Question. Much to Edward’s chagrin, Bob Danby, the student best versed in politics, actually defended the Irish for their choices in the 1918 election that saw Sinn Fein win a majority as well as the decision not to take their seats in Westminster. Danby cites Rousseau and other political theories that supported democratic ideals in presenting an objective assessment of the current situation in Ireland. These statements and opinions, coming from an Englishman no less, infuriated Edward, leading to an exchange where Edward challenges Danby to justify the fact that the British Army defended Ireland during the war while the Catholics stayed at home. Danby challenges Edward’s facts, saying, “Do you realize that there were a hundred thousand, I repeat, a hundred thousand Catholic Irishmen fighting in the British Army? There was no question of treachery at all. The war against the Kaiser had nothing to do with the fight for Ireland’s freedom.”⁴⁸

Troubles contains a number of parallels between the Ireland of the Anglo-Irish War and the Ireland of the Troubles. The character Edward Spencer represents Irish Unionism as an outdated and theoretically empty political goal. As a result its adherents

⁴⁷ J. G. Farrell, *Troubles* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1970), 98.

⁴⁸ Farrell, 411.

are paranoid about threats from Nationalists, which results in an overly aggressive and provocative method for dealing with them. Catholic Nationalists are represented through the character of Sarah Devlin, a love interest of both Edward and the Major, and Dr. Ryan. Although both characters possess strong feelings about Ireland's political future, neither one engages in aggressive behavior to defend their position. In this way, the Catholic Nationalists are seen as well educated about the relationship between Ireland and Britain, and on an even temperamental keel. While Farrell casts the Unionists as detached and illogical, and the Nationalists as impassioned and pragmatic, the Irish on either side appear incapable of governing themselves (a statement made by Edward Spencer several times). It takes the objectivity of the English as seen in Major Archer and the revealing scene with the students from Oxford, to set the wayward Irish straight. In other words, the Irish cannot solve their problems on their own and require an English intermediary in order to do so. *Troubles*, therefore, challenges the politics of separation, but fails to provide a domestic solution to the issues in Ireland.

One of the most popular works of fiction to focus exclusively on the Irish experience in the First World War was Jennifer Johnston's *How Many Miles To Babylon?*. Published in 1974, the story is written from the point of view of an incarcerated Alexander (Alec) Moore. The novel tells the story of two Irish young men from Wicklow who become friends, Moore who comes from a landed, Anglo-Irish Protestant family and Jeremiah (Jerry) Crowe a poor Catholic. The two boys bond over a mutual love for horses and make plans to breed and raise horses together when they get older and Alec inherits his father's estate. Jerry is the first of the two boys to become

aware of the rumblings of war in Europe and at an early point demonstrates Irish nationalist leanings. This is evident in Jerry's perspective on the war, which is that the Germans are trying to "fix all those eejits in Europe" and the British, in turn, are trying to "fix" the Germans. With Britain embroiled in war, the Irish have the opportunity to "fix" the British.⁴⁹ Jerry eyes Britain's difficulty as Ireland's opportunity. Nonetheless, both young men end up enlisting in the British army and serve in France. Alec's mother forces him to enlist despite misgivings from both himself and his father. Jerry, despite his nationalist leanings, cites economic reasons for enlisting early on and later reveals an ulterior motive of gaining weapons proficiency to aid the Irish republican cause. Because of his social class Alec goes to Belfast for training and receives a commission as an officer in the Royal Irish Rifles while Jerry serves as an enlisted man at the rank of private. Although the military hierarchy reaffirms each man's social rank, neither man proves to be an ideal soldier and they are reunited at the front where they remain close friends. When Jerry receives a letter from his mother stating that his father, who is also in the army, has gone missing, Jerry leaves his post at the front to find out what happened to his father. When Jerry returns from going AWOL he is court-martialed and sentenced to die by firing squad. In an effort to teach Alec a lesson the commanding officer orders Alec to lead the execution. Alec's final act of defiance in the novel comes when he visits Jerry in the stockade the night before the execution and shoots his friend before the military has the opportunity to do so.

⁴⁹ Jennifer Johnston, *How Many Miles to Babylon?* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1974), 21. The book was adapted into a film starring Daniel Day-Lewis in 1982.

Johnston uses the First World War and Ireland to examine a number of historical and contemporary issues. The first half of the book, when Alec and Jerry are still in Wicklow, interrogates the theme of the decline of Anglo-Irish Ireland. Alec's mother is an over-protective woman who shelters her son from the outside world. While she does this to preserve the delicacy of her boy, Alec is disconnected from the currents of contemporary Irish society, and by extension the Moore family remains isolated from broader European trends, too. Alec's mother also seeks to preserve established sectarian and class lines when she forbids Alec from seeing Jerry. Not only does Jerry represent the zeitgeist, as he is attuned to the nationalist and republican ideas stirring in Ireland, he is the conduit through which Alec learns of these ideas. The disconnectedness of the Moore family and their focus on past glories parallels the situation in Northern Ireland in the 1960s and 1970s. Johnston implies that the Unionist's eye toward the past results in a myopic view toward the future. The same disconnect can be applied to Irish nationalists who take a very narrow view of what constituted Irish identity, one that centered on republicanism and ignored the First World War.

While recognizing the existing tensions across both religious and social spectrums, Johnston shows that these barriers can be overcome through the development of the relationship between Alec and Jerry. When Alec's mother forbids him from seeing Jerry, he fails to understand why. Alec's father tells him that his friendship with Jerry is an "unsuitable relationship," and that is something that must be learned and engrained at a young age.⁵⁰ Yet the evolving friendship between Alec and Jerry suggests the potential of younger generations to escape the restrictive social dynamics of past generations. That

⁵⁰ Johnston, 29.

is not to say that they will be free of growing pains, but rather that the awareness exists of a break with traditional social norms. Alec's parents are not the only representation of the established society that challenges and complicates the break with the past. In the military, their major represents the British counterpart to Alec's parents. Despite numerous obstacles from their military superiors both men persevere in their friendship. Alec's final encounter with Jerry carries with it an implicit argument that in order to achieve a resolution of tensions in Ireland, Protestant Unionists and Catholic Nationalists both need to accept their countrymen and likewise be willing to make sacrifices for the sake of a peaceful future. Ultimately, Johnston's most poignant argument is also the simplest, that the death and loss in the First World War was a shared experience throughout Ireland because Irish men of all economic, religious, and political convictions fought and died together in combat.

By drawing implicit parallels between the First World War and events in contemporary Ireland, Farrell and Johnston use the war to illustrate the weaknesses in mythologized concepts of Irish identity and the absurdity of hard-line political positions. Loyalism is presented as either too reactionary, in the case of Farrell, or too aloof to recognize its political and social shortcomings, in the case of Johnston. Republicanism, on the other hand, is depicted as a brass ring just out of reach, and while it is something that stirs people to action it ultimately falls short of its intended goals. Both works show how the simplicity of individual decisions are complicated by the influence of ideologues and their followers, and as a result decisions change course and trajectory until they no longer represent the will of the individual. Ultimately, these works show the error of

simply maintaining the status quo in Ireland and that doing so would be regressive for the entire island. Instead, they suggest that only by moving past these entrenched ideologies could Ireland achieve political and social progress.

Music

Much of the music that preserved the memory of the Great War in Ireland before the Second World War tended to consist of marching songs, regimental airs, and old standards, like “Tipperary.” While this type of music proved popular for commemorative functions in the ex-service community, it had little appeal outside of that context. The folk ballads discussed in Chapter 3 remained the principal treatment of the Great War in popular music until the late 1960s, and many of these compositions maintained a republican perspective that censured the First World War. Popular music in Ireland was not immune to the changes that occurred in Britain and the United States. Most notably, the 1960s saw the rise of folk music and the emergence of the singer-songwriter, a genre and tradition that remains popular in Ireland. Pairing the rise of folk music and the anti-war movement of the 1960s and 1970s with the outbreak of the Troubles in Northern Ireland proved fertile ground for social commentary. By the 1970s some popular folk ballads began to take the First World War as their subject, partially or in total.

Two examples of such songs come from Eric Bogle. “No Man’s Land” and “And The Band Played Waltzing Matilda,” both of which gained considerable popularity in Ireland even though a Scotsman living in Australia wrote them. One factor that fueled this popularity was the decision of Liam Clancy and Tommy Makem, who rejoined forces around 1975, to record and perform the songs. “No Man’s Land,” also known as

“Willie McBride” or “Green Fields of France,” is a reflection on the destruction and death brought on by war. The lyrics are written from the perspective of a traveler resting in a country cemetery in France addressing the gravestone of the dead Private Willie McBride. The song laments the staggering loss of men during the First World War as well as the impact these losses had on their loved ones back home. Despite these observations, the narrator goes on to inform McBride that notwithstanding the sacrifices made by him and his comrades that war, death, and destruction persist in the modern world, and that the “war to end war” did no such thing.

Similarly, “Waltzing Matilda” takes the form of a first person account of a young man who enthusiastically joined the army in Australia and went to fight at Gallipoli. The narrator describes the chaos, death, and bloodshed of the war, even going so far as to suggest that death was preferable to the trauma survivors experienced, whether it was mental or physical, that it was better to be dead than to be left half a man. The song also describes the veteran’s resentment for the way the public treated soldiers returning from the war. In the song, the crowds gathered to welcome home the soldiers, but upon seeing the wounded and maimed bodies of the veterans they did not cheer their return, rather they stared in shock and disgust before “they turned all their faces away,” a situation similar to the one in Ireland. Wounded war veterans faced a double psychic trauma. On one hand veterans had to deal with the limitations of the body (whether the wounds were mental or physical), and on the other veterans faced the stigma that the rest of their countrymen ascribed to them. Finally, the narrator takes a negative attitude toward the parades and commemorative events honoring the men who fought in the war, declaring

that as the years passed the marching men represented a “forgotten war” and illustrating his despondence by pointing out that “the young people ask, what are they marching for?/And I ask myself the same question.”⁵¹

Both songs have a clear anti-war message and Bogle participated in various anti-war movements while still living in Britain. As a member of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament movement in the 1960s he took part in some of the Aldermaston marches.⁵² It was not until 1971 that he wrote “Matilda” and 1975 that he wrote “No Man’s Land”; both songs appeared on his first LP released in 1980, but Clancy and Makem had already had hits with them in the late 1970s. When writing “No Man’s Land,” Bogle was well aware of the Troubles in Northern Ireland and the IRA’s bombing campaign in Britain, which influenced his decision to select a soldier with the surname McBride as one of the interlocutors for his song. The real Willie McBride was a member of the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, and died in France in 1916 at the age of 19. The use of a Northern Irish name was deliberate in order to remind listeners that thousands of Irishmen fought and died in the Great War along side Britain and its allies.⁵³ Bogle intended both songs to

⁵¹ Copies of lyrics for these songs can be found on Eric Bogle’s website. “And The Band Played Waltzing Matilda” <<http://ericbogle.net/lyrics/lyricspdf/andbandplayedwaltzingm.pdf>> (Accessed 3 February 2010); “No Man’s Land” <<http://ericbogle.net/lyrics/lyricspdf/nomansland.pdf>> (Accessed 3 February 2010).

⁵² The Aldermaston Marches took place between Aldermaston and London from 1958-1963 and were demonstrations by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament against nuclear weapons. Aldermaston was chosen because it was near Britain’s Atomic Weapons Research Establishment.

⁵³ Eric Bogle, private e-mail, 4 April 2009.

perpetuate the memory of the Great War by showing the bravery and camaraderie of ordinary soldiers as well as to remind people about the futility and destruction of war.⁵⁴

The fact that Liam Clancy and Tommy Makem were primarily responsible for popularizing these songs is significant as well. In the early 1960s, performing together as The Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem, which included Liam's older brothers Tom and Paddy, the group found themselves as at the forefront of the folk revival in the United States. Their repertoire focused on Irish songs and ballads, several of which dealt with issues of independence and Irish republicanism. Several of these would become popular "rebel songs" on both sides of the Atlantic. Although the group started out, and were a commercial success in America, they were very influential in Ireland as well. In many ways, the Clancys helped to shape and influence the direction of Irish folk music since the 1960s as their music became a constituent element of Irish identity in Ireland and throughout the Irish diaspora. Clearly, "Matilda" and "No Man's Land" were a departure from the republican songs and ballads often associated with the Clancys. At the same time, the fact that it was Liam Clancy and Tommy Makem who recorded and performed the songs likely contributed to their widespread acceptance and popularity. So, too, did the songs' relevance to contemporary Irish issues.

Taken together, the literature and music influenced by the First World War and the Troubles made more apparent the ramifications of the triumph of de Valera and Fianna Fáil in relation to social progress in the south. The decades of both explicit and implicit advocacy for a single conception of Irish history and identity ran roughshod over

⁵⁴ Eric Bogle, private e-mail, 4 April 2009.

pluralism and diversity, and culminated in the Troubles. In many respects, the time spent nurturing a specific brand of Irish nationalism, in the end, created the same outcome that the First World War did—violence, and ironic and meaningless loss of life. Although the scale of death and destruction was much smaller in Ireland comparatively, the fact that Fianna Fáil had such a strong hand in directing the trajectory of Irish society toward this end makes it easier to draw parallels and comparisons between de Valera and Fianna Fáil, and the leaders of the belligerent nations of the First World War.

Of course, not everyone in the Republic bought into the dominant concepts of Irish identity. The violence and destruction of the Troubles tarnished the glory and honor attributed to the Rising's leaders. In this way, the Troubles enabled some artists and writers in the south to move past the trauma of the struggle Irish patriots experienced in their fight for independence. Once this component of Irish national identity began to erode, it became easier to embrace the common experience of pain that both northern and southern Ireland shared stemming from the First World War. In this context, the fact that Liam Clancy, who rose to prominence singing nationalist anthems with his brothers, embraced a song like "Waltzing Matilda" and endeared it to thousands of Irish people comes across as less of a knee-jerk about-face and more as an intuitive reaction to the state of Irish society and culture. As the years progressed and people across Ireland became increasingly tired of the IRA and the violence in the North, it became even clearer that a shared history existed between the north and the south, and the First World War was the common link.

Education

Silence in the area of formal education in the south on the subject of the First World War exemplified just how deeply republican opposition to the war was. Sectarian and political divisions influenced history instruction in the Free State's primary and secondary schools. Historical objectivity gave way to ideologically based history that reinforced the Catholic, nationalist ethos so central to the Free State. While Northern Irish education officials "recommended strict control of text-books and inculcation of 'loyalty' through study of history of one's 'native country,'" instruction was far more lax than those in the south.⁵⁵ Education in the Free State placed a heavy emphasis on religion and the Irish language, and "Irish history almost unsullied by foreign associations was taught from fifth standard upwards between 1926 and 1971, after a brief period in which junior pupils were exposed to Irish stories, legends and inspirational biographies."⁵⁶

Historian David Fitzpatrick described the general public's understanding of the Great War as limited to "the sketchy and thinly documented references to the War ... found in textbooks and surveys of Irish history spanning the period 1914-18. These works usually treat the War as an external factor which did little more than modify the terms of political debate and redefine the political alignments in Ireland."⁵⁷ For example, *A Short History of the Irish People* (1921), simply stated that war broke out in Europe in August 1914 but fails to mention any Irish involvement. Sinn Fein's ascension and the Easter

⁵⁵ David Fitzpatrick, "The Futility of History: A Failed Experiment in Irish Education," in *Ideology and the Historians*, ed. Ciaran Brady (Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 1991), 169, 175.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 176.

⁵⁷ David Fitzpatrick, ed., *Ireland and the First World War* (Dublin: Trinity History Workshop, 1986), viii.

Rising both received attention, while no mention was made of seminal events of the war in late 1917 and early 1918, including the Russian Revolution, and Germany's "Michael" offensive. Completely absent from the text were the names of famous battles, such as Gallipoli, the Somme, or Ypres, as well as any mention of the Irish divisions that fought in those engagements. The Conscription Crisis in Ireland in 1918 commanded a single sentence. The 1927 edition of the same text included a chapter titled "Ireland During The Great War," which spanned a mere six pages out of almost 600 total pages. The later edition included estimates of the number of men Ireland contributed to the war, but the substance of the text differed little from the earlier edition. The Conscription Crisis, for example, received a couple of paragraphs, but as a whole, the war functioned as a backdrop to political developments in Ireland.⁵⁸ The chapter title, therefore, was quite accurate in that there was little coverage of Ireland *in* the war, but rather it dealt with events in Ireland during the war years.

School textbooks reveal a similar scenario and demonstrated how deeply the Republican national identity permeated Irish society. The fourth volume of *A Class-Book of Irish History*, which covered the period from the Act of Union to independence briefly addressed the formation of both the Ulster and Irish volunteers, the outbreak of the Great War, and the Conscription Crisis in 1918. On the outbreak of the war, the text stated, "All Ireland was thrilled by the heroism of the Irish troops on foreign battlefields" based on the idea that they went to war to defend the rights of small nations. In total, the Great War coverage spanned just over a page of text, and was immediately followed by five pages

⁵⁸ Mary Teresa Hayden and George Aloysius Moonan, *A Short History of the Irish People* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1921 and 1927).

on the Easter Rising, and another two pages that provided brief biographies on the most important Rising leaders. Even the reflective questions and exercises at the end of the chapter reinforce the idea that the Great War was little more than background noise to the symphony of the Easter Rising. Although the text listed 1914 and the outbreak of the Great War as a key date, the question “What caused the ‘split’ in the Volunteer ranks after the outbreak of the European [war]?” showed that the war itself played second fiddle to domestic politics and the rise of Republicanism.⁵⁹ By the late 1940s, the tenor of educational textbooks reflected more fully the hegemony of republican Irish identity and its associated history. The final section of *The Educational History of Ireland* (1947) covered the period 1905-1921, yet did not even contain a sub-heading for the First World War. The war received a brief mention within the discussion of the Irish Volunteers and the Conscription Crisis, but the primary goal of the chapter was to chart the rise of republican nationalism. Of the nineteen “revision questions” that covered the chapter, not a single one included the term “the Great War” nor sought expansion on the subject.⁶⁰ Based on the government’s position toward the First World War, its neglect in school curriculum came as little surprise, and simply contributed to the “national amnesia” on the subject.

⁵⁹ James Carty, *A Class-Book of Irish History with Maps and Illustrations: Book IV, From the Act of Union to the Present Day* (London: Macmillan, 1931), 106-122.

⁶⁰ *The Educational History of Ireland Part II: From A.D. 1603 to Modern Times. Compiled Under the Direction of An Seabhac* (Baile Átha Cliath: Educational Co. of Ireland, 1947), 131-150, 158-159.

Public Discourse on the Great War in Ireland

The struggle to overcome this situation began outside the influence of the Irish government. In the 1970s, journalist Kevin Myers took up the subject of Ireland and the First World War. He became one of the most proactive and fervent advocates for recognizing the role of the Irish in the First World War and preserving the memory of the Irish war dead. Myers' point-of-view toward Ireland's role in the Great War recognizes that these men made considerable sacrifices and deserved to be remembered, arguing for the superiority of self-sacrifice over politics. Myers stated that when he first began to investigate the subject of Ireland in the First World War in the 1970s, very few people possessed any knowledge of Ireland's participation in the war and surviving veterans made little effort to reverse the situation. In the mid-1970s, Myers sought to contact Irish veterans and document their war experiences. He wrote to provincial newspapers asking for any surviving veterans to contact him and only three people did.⁶¹ Given the amount of benevolent work done by the British Legion throughout the period, which maintained a caseload of about 1,000, many of which undoubtedly related to the First World War, such a small return becomes revealing. It was no surprise that combat veterans were reluctant to discuss their wartime experiences, but three willing subjects suggests much more than mere unwillingness to discuss the war. This scenario demonstrated that these individuals learned, over the course of the twentieth century, that their countrymen's indifference to their sacrifice rendered it unimportant. As a result, ex-soldiers likely felt that any attempt

⁶¹ Kevin Myers, *From the Irish Times Column "An Irishman's Diary"* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2000), 264.

to reverse the situation would result in greater indifference or additional ostracism on the subject, especially without a vocal and influential advocate.

In a November 1981 column Myers commended Irish author Kevin B. Nowlan, who had recently appeared on “Day by Day,” an Irish radio program, to discuss the memory of the First World War in Ireland. Myers categorized the forgetfulness of the Irish population on this subject as “scandalous neglect” and applauded the “selflessness” of those Irish men who joined the British army in 1914 to fight in the Great War. At the same time, Myers was careful to ensure that the facts of Ireland’s participation in the war were not exaggerated in an effort to reclaim that memory. The show’s host, John Bowland, while interviewing two surviving veterans, suggested that for every man who participated in the Easter Rising, sixteen joined the British army. Myers, however, is quick to point out that if this math were true, then there would have been over 22,000 men involved in the Rising to account for the over 350,000 Irish men in the British army.⁶² While this type of exaggeration made good fodder for public discourse, it did little to push forward the memory of the Irish Great War veterans. Clearly, Myers’ goal was simple: to make the Irish public aware of the facts surrounding Ireland’s role in the war and for them to acknowledge their negligence in remembering the thousands of men who fought and died in that conflict.

Two years later, a controversy over Remembrance Day in the Republic would vault the First World War into the headlines of the national press. In October 1983, the British Legion, in accordance with their desire to broaden the number of conflicts

⁶² *Irish Times*, 12 November 1981.

commemorated to include all wars and Irish participants on United Nations service, invited members of the Irish Defense Forces to take part in the commemorative ceremony at St. Patrick's Cathedral on Remembrance Sunday. Both the Army and the Government had sent representatives to attend Remembrance Day services in the past (these generally consisted of Fine Gael or Labour politicians, but never a member of Fianna Fáil, the President, or Taoiseach), but the focal point of the 1983 row was the decision of Army personnel to participate in the ceremony; Fianna Fáil condemned this action almost immediately.⁶³ The ensuing debate in the public sphere showed that Irish people were still very much divided on the political meaning of Remembrance Day and that a sizable gap continued to exist between the official and vernacular memories of the war. Deputy leader of Fianna Fáil, Brian Lenihan told RTE Radio that he considered the entire ordeal divisive and called the service "a ceremony associated with the British in the past." Instead of the Irish Army participating in Remembrance Day services, Lenihan voiced support for a national day of remembrance for all Irish war dead, regardless of creed or the banner under which they fought, an idea that had been proposed ten years earlier but never come to fruition.⁶⁴

Public support for the Army's participation, however, was widespread, and in some cases came from unlikely personages.⁶⁵ James McMonagle of Letterkenny, County Donegal wrote a letter to the editor of the *Irish Times* expressing his support for the

⁶³ *Irish Times*, 22 October, 14 November 1983; Leonard, "The twinge of memory," 107-108.

⁶⁴ *Irish Times*, 25 October 1983.

⁶⁵ See the letters to the editor in the 27 October 1983 edition of the *Irish Times*.

Army's decision to participate in the ceremony. McMonagle was a veteran of the IRA, the IRB, experienced internment, had been awarded a Combat Medal, and retired from the Irish Army at the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. He proffered the names of Tom Barry and Emmet Dalton, renowned soldiers in the fight for independence who also served in the British Army as justification for his support.⁶⁶ The public debate, however, had no impact on military official's decision to attend the Dublin service and over 3,000 people, no doubt some inspired by the government's position and public debate, packed into St. Patrick's Cathedral that year.⁶⁷

Following the controversy surrounding the Dublin Remembrance Day services in 1983 involving the Irish army, Myers wrote about the deeper ideological issues that prevented repeated participation in 1984. The nationalist narrative of Irish history in the twentieth century, he argued, is blindly accepted as "The Truth" without examining its underpinnings. These, he asserted, are hate—"hatred for England, to be sure, and Englishness, but more than that: the real hatred is for those who do not share that hatred. Traitors. Lackeys. Worse than the Brits."⁶⁸ The "Truth," Myers describes is precisely the type of nationalist thinking that became associated with Irish national identity following de Valera's ascension in 1932 and the same mentality that marginalized the memory of the Great War to the extent that associating the war with Ireland produced confused looks on the faces of Irish citizens. Irish history books remained silent on the subject and the

⁶⁶ *Irish Times*, 12 November 1983.

⁶⁷ *Irish Times*, 14 November 1983.

⁶⁸ *Irish Times*, 20 October 1984.

men who fought were allowed to fall into obscurity. Nevertheless, the work of Kevin Myers, the artists discussed above, and other special interest groups came to a head in the mid 1980s, initiating a re-examination of the relationship between Ireland and the Great War and a renaissance of interest in the subject among professional historians and the Irish public writ large.

The following year the Legion once again sought the participation of the Irish Defense Forces for Remembrance Day services, but the events of 1983 resurrected discussions about establishing a national day of remembrance. In light of the on-going debates the British Legion decided not to extend a formal invitation to the Irish Army “in order to prevent further embarrassment and controversy.”⁶⁹ By 1985 a National Commemoration Day was established to take place on the Sunday closest to 11 July, the date on which the Truce was signed in 1921 stopping the Anglo-Irish War. The remembrance ceremony took place in the Garden of Remembrance in Dublin, located in Parnell Square.⁷⁰ The National Commemoration Day Committee, which consisted mainly of retired Irish Army officers, however, opposed extending an invitation to the British Legion to participate and to dedicating a new plaque at the Garden commemorating the Irish who had died in all wars and United Nations service. At a meeting in Dublin, the Committee argued that the Garden of Remembrance was build to commemorate those

⁶⁹ *Irish Times*, 8, 19 October 1984.

⁷⁰ *Irish Times*, 20 May 1985. This was a commemorative monument opened in 1966 on the 50th anniversary of the Easter Rising and dedicated to those who had died in the Anglo-Irish war and earlier conflicts and uprisings for the cause of Irish independence. There is no mention of the First World War on the memorial, and should not be confused with the British Legion’s Garden of Remembrance that consisted of planting crosses for loved ones during Remembrance Day ceremonies. Yvonne Whelan, “Symbolising the state: The iconography of O’Connell Street, Dublin after Independence (1922),” *Irish Geography* 34, no. 2 (2001): 145-150.

who had died for Irish freedom, and had already been dedicated. The Committee also suggested “they could not erect another plaque every time some generation died for Ireland.”⁷¹ The situation in Northern Ireland bore on the Committee’s position, evidenced in a statement by Sean McBride, stating “It would also seem somewhat irrational that our army should actively involve itself in ceremonies involving the British Army which is occupying a portion of our country against the will of the majority of the Irish people.”⁷²

At the same meeting of the National Commemoration Day Committee, members brushed off criticism by a concerned citizen who claimed they were being divisive and did not represent the opinion of the majority of the Irish people.⁷³ In a letter to the editor of the *Irish Times*, Darren Fox of Dundalk, County Louth, argued that commemorating the Irish dead of both world wars should not be left to a British institution, regardless of their benevolence. Fox advocated creating a group responsible for commemorating Ireland’s war dead and “to keep an eye on the Islandbridge memorial and other matters pertinent.”⁷⁴ This exchange exemplifies the relationship between the official and vernacular memories of the war. In the realm of vernacular memory, the National Commemoration Day could serve as a conduit toward forming an Irish-based organization to commemorate Ireland’s world war dead and the event itself would function as an opportunity to carryout that commemoration. Almost seventy years after the cessation of hostilities on the continent, the Southern Irish finally possessed the

⁷¹ *Irish Times*, 29 May 1985.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Irish Times*, 27 June 1985.

machinery, in the form of the National Commemoration Day, necessary to embrace the memory of the First World War on their own terms. However, it would be years before official Irish channels would begin to take advantage of this situation.

Drama

In addition to literature and music, drama addressed the memory of the First World War in Ireland and made important strides toward re-conceptualizing Ireland's role in the war. In February 1985, Irish playwright Frank McGuinness debuted his play "Observe The Sons of Ulster Marching towards the Somme" at the Peacock Theater in Dublin. The play examines the lives of eight Ulstermen as they endure life in the trenches of the First World War, an experience that challenges the ideas and convictions of every character. Ultimately the play pitches the senseless and large-scale loss of life at the front against the ideals that led the men to enlist. The characters' responses to the carnage at the front affects them all differently: William Moore suffers from shell-shock while his friend John Millen becomes the prototypical soldier who follows orders without question or conscience; George Anderson bolsters his faith in Ulster and the Protestant Unionist cause while his compatriot Nat McIlwaine, an ardent Orangeman at the outset of the play, realizes that even if Ulster emerges intact after the war it will not turn out the way it was intended to.⁷⁵

A native of County Donegal, McGuinness was raised on a regimen of nationalist history and never learned of the heavy losses at the Somme until he moved to Dublin. He told the *Irish Times*:

⁷⁵ Frank McGuinness, *Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching Towards the Somme* (London, 1986), Part 3: Pairings.

“When I examined what happened on that day I realised that it was the Battle of the Somme and the psychic blow that it delivered to a part of the population of this island which has effectively shaped our destinies as anything that happened on Easter Sunday. And that had been kept from me, for whatever reason I don’t know. I imagine a lot of things were kept from the Protestant people as well. This knowledge could have caused not a political unity but certainly an imaginative unity, an imaginative understanding of why people were behaving the way they did.”⁷⁶

The play, therefore, is not an “attack” on Ulster Protestantism as one reviewer in the *Irish Times* suggested, but rather an inquisitive examination of its historical roots and how extraordinary events can rattle the foundation of even the most fixed ideology.⁷⁷ Of the eight characters in the play, seven die at the Somme and only Pyper survives. At the beginning of the play an old Pyper orates on how the blood sacrifice at the Somme could not preserve Ulster. Instead, the myths that the offensive created helped to further entrench political tension in the north, which, led, in turn, to Ulster’s demise.⁷⁸ “Observe the Sons of Ulster” proved to be a very popular play in Ireland and the United Kingdom, traveling to Belfast, Cork, Coleraine, Sligo, Limerick, Edinburgh, and London, before returning to the Abbey Theater in Dublin all the while garnering positive reviews. McGuinness received a number of honors from the play as well, including the Harveys Award for Best New Irish Play of the Year in 1985 and the Year’s Most Promising Playwright at the 1986 London Standard Drama Awards.⁷⁹

McGuinness’ play debuted at a time when the Dáil, Northern politicians, and Westminster were in discussions to address the political future of Northern Ireland. The

⁷⁶ *Irish Times*, 15 February 1985.

⁷⁷ *Irish Times*, 19 February 1985.

⁷⁸ McGuinness, Part 1: Remembrance.

⁷⁹ *Irish Times*, 5 April 1985, 14 June 1985, 17 December 1985, 19 November 1986.

Anglo-Irish Agreement, signed on 15 November 1985 ensured that all three governments worked together to try to create a more amenable situation in the north and that any change regarding the northern state's future as a part of the United Kingdom would come through a majority vote from the people of Northern Ireland.⁸⁰ Therefore, the dynamic between Protestants and Catholics, Nationalists and Unionists, and the people and their government were going through an evolutionary process. Like the characters in McGuinness' play who were irreversibly changed during the Great War, the violence and destruction of The Troubles took their toll on the Irish, resulting in political and ideological shifts on both sides of the border.

Academic History

In the wake of renewed attention to the Irish experience in the First World War, academic circles began to take up the subject for the first time in the 1980s. Patrick Callan's doctoral dissertation on recruiting in Ireland during the war, completed in 1984, and an article published on the same subject in 1987 was one of the first efforts to tabulate the number of Irish men who served in the Great War.⁸¹ At Trinity College, Dublin, historian David Fitzpatrick held a workshop on the subject of Ireland in the First World War. Selections from this workshop were published in 1986 as *Ireland and the First World War*, and the collection addressed an array of social and political aspects of Ireland's war experience in order to demonstrate the complexities of the time. According

⁸⁰ Padraig O'Malley, *The Uncivil Wars: Ireland Today*, 3rd ed., (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997), 419-422.

⁸¹ Patrick Callan, "Voluntary Recruiting for the British Army in Ireland during the First World War" (Dublin: University College Dublin, PhD Dissertation, 1984); idem, "Recruiting for the British Army in Ireland during the First World War," *Irish Sword* 17, no. 66 (1987): 42-56.

to Fitzpatrick, “[n]o previous book has explored the War’s many-faceted impact upon Ireland,” which made the book an important step toward initiating the historical debate of Ireland and the Great War.⁸² Three articles by Martin Staunton that addressed the war appeared in 1986, and these examined First World War graves in Ireland, the battle of Ginchy and its place in Irish history, and a study of the relationship between the Royal Munster Fusiliers and the town of Kilrush, County Clare.⁸³ While these publications served to create awareness in the south, Philip Orr published *The Road To The Somme* in 1987, which recounted the formation of the 36th (Ulster) Division and traced their war experience to the Somme and its aftermath. On the one hand Orr’s book reiterated the importance of the Battle of the Somme to Northern Irish identity, on the other hand, he showed the reality Ulster men faced when they returned from the war—how their mental and physical wounds permanently altered their lives. The fact that Orr was able to interview a number of war veterans and use their experiences to flesh out his work added an important human element to his narrative.⁸⁴



Between 1939 and 1987, the memory of the First World War in Ireland was reconfigured. The Second World War, the establishment of the Republic of Ireland, the outbreak of the Troubles, the suspension of the Stormont government, and the Anglo-

⁸² David Fitzpatrick, ed., *Ireland and the First World War* (Dublin: Trinity History Workshop, 1986), viii.

⁸³ Martin Staunton, “First world war graves in Ireland,” *An Cosantóir* 46, no. 1 (1986): 13-14; idem, “Ginchy: nationalist Ireland’s forgotten battle of the Somme,” *An Cosantóir* 46, no. 12 (1986): 24-26; idem, “Kilrush, Co. Clare and the Royal Munster Fusiliers: the experience of an Irish town in the first world war,” *Irish Sword* 16, no. 65 (1986): 268-276.

⁸⁴ Philip Orr, *The Road to the Somme: Men of the Ulster Division Tell Their Story*, 2nd ed. (Belfast, Northern Ireland: Blackstaff Press, 2008) (First published in 1987).

Irish Agreement constituted the political backdrop against which the memory of the Great War evolved. The British Legion and the other ex-servicemen's organizations established during the interwar period ceased to be the sole guardians of Ireland's Great War memory in the south. As the years wore on these groups faced serious membership problems, and while they persevered with their commemorative programs, they took on a reduced profile. The outbreak of the Troubles in Northern Ireland would breathe new life into the memory of the First War in Ireland. For the first time, there was an attempt to view the experience of the First World War as a shared Irish one, something that affected everyone on the island, and not just ex-servicemen, loyalists, or unionists. While these changes were very real, it is important not to overstate the progress made toward re-imagining the Irish nation during this period. Tensions between vernacular and official memory persisted in the Republic, where the former was gradually coming to grips with Ireland's role in the war while government officials and other republican groups remained hostile to the war, fearing that to accept it would diminish the dominant Irish national identity. It would take more violence and several years before the opinions of republicans on both sides of the border would begin to thaw toward the Great War.

CHAPTER SIX:
CREATING “A FUTURE TOGETHER”: THE RESURRECTION OF GREAT WAR
MEMORY IN IRELAND SINCE 1987

At about quarter to eleven on the morning of 9 November 1987, a thirty-pound bomb detonated inside the St. Michael’s Community Center in Enniskillen, County Fermanagh, Northern Ireland. The date and time are significant because hundreds of civilians had gathered on that November morning to witness the annual Remembrance Day parade to commemorate those from the local community who had died during the world wars and the ongoing Troubles in Northern Ireland. The IRA bomb that disrupted the event added more casualties to the death toll of the Troubles, claiming the lives of eleven civilians and injuring many more.

Unfortunately, attacks on First World War monuments and the memory of the war itself were not new in Ireland. For example, changes with maintenance staff at the National War Memorial at Islandbridge showed how the situation worsened over the previous two decades. The Irish National War Memorial had as many as twelve employees in 1969, but by 1987 the number of caretakers stood at a paltry three. The employees who remained employed at the park lacked a secure base of operations because their workshops and canteens had been set afire so many times it was necessary to abandon them for safety reasons. In addition, opposition to the British Legion’s Poppy Appeal surfaced on an annual basis in the letters to the editor of Irish newspapers.

However, the carnage of the Enniskillen bombing combined with the extent of the damage and the loss of lives, especially among young and elderly civilians, woke up people in the south to the absurdity of decrying the memory of dead soldiers and aged veterans.

By the late 1980s, local interest in Great War commemoration was on the rise in southern Ireland. This period was also one of greater dialog on the subject of the First World War among politicians and government officials in Eire. Much of the increased attention to the legacy of the Great War stemmed from the Remembrance Day bombing at Enniskillen in 1987. Other contributing factors that help to explain the evolution of official memory of the war include the Celtic Tiger economic boom, which placed Ireland as an important nation in the European Union, and the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, which made significant in-roads toward permanent peace in Northern Ireland. In this milieu, events involving the southern State and Great War memory took place both domestically and internationally. In addition to this long overdue attention from the Irish establishment, the Great War continued to be fertile ground for re-evaluating Ireland's past and present in Irish culture. While a number of authors continued to use the memory of the First World War to understand contemporary Irish problems, historians began to provide the type of rigorous, scholarly work on the war that had been missing from Irish historiography for decades. Taken together these changes continued an on-going shift away from the sectarian and politically driven foundations of republican Irish national identity to a more complex Irish identity that included the counter-identity developed and sustained by Ireland's ex-service community and their supporters. Therefore, this period

was one of remembering and forgetting. Not only was there a greater push in the south to remember their forebears' role in the First World War, but across the entire island, north and south, the memory of the Great War helped to open a path for moving beyond "The Troubles" and a restrictive, sectarian Irish national identity.

In both Northern Ireland and the Republic political leaders responded strongly and quickly to the Enniskillen bombing. Across the board, politicians condemned the actions of the IRA. Northern Secretary Tom King flew to Enniskillen after receiving word of the bombing, and focused his opprobrium on the fact that the IRA bomb specifically targeted civilians. By 1987, attendees at Remembrance Day ceremonies in the north typically consisted of the elderly, pensioners, and various youth organizations. That the IRA targeted this section of the Protestant population made the bombing particularly heinous. If all had gone to plan, however, the violence would have been much greater because in the village of Tullyhommon, the IRA claimed responsibility for another, much larger bomb weighing 150 pounds that failed to detonate during the Remembrance Day festivities there.¹ Highlighting the on-going debate over an extradition agreement between the North and the Republic at the time, Rev. Ian Paisley of the Democratic Unionist Party said that the perpetrators on the bombing were likely taking refuge in the south. In the Republic, Taoiseach Charles Haughey of Fianna Fáil shared the disgust of northern politicians toward to bombing. Haughey commented on the situation, stating:

I know I speak for every decent Irishman and Irishwoman in expressing the anger and revulsion we feel towards those who planned and executed this

¹ *Irish Times*, 9 November, 12 November 1987.

criminal act of carnage against the innocent people gathered to commemorate their dead.

Those responsible must be repudiated utterly and no effort must be spared to ensure that they are brought to justice. I extend to those bereaved or injured our deepest sympathy for the cruel loss they have sustained through this unspeakable act.²

Despite the Taoiseach's comments, no one from the southern government made an attempt to visit Enniskillen in-person to express their sympathies. The official memory of the Great War in the south would not change overnight. The lack of initiative on the part of the southern government drew criticism from commentators in the Irish press.³ Irish politicians defended themselves by saying that they did not want their presence to add tension to an already strained situation. Nevertheless, in some corners the inaction of southern officials came across as indifference toward the events at Enniskillen.⁴

One of the most surprising statements on the Enniskillen bombing came from Gerry Adams, one of Sinn Fein's northern leaders. Shortly after the bombing Adams released a statement that read: "On behalf of the Republican people, I extend sympathy and condolences to the family and friends of those killed and injured yesterday in Enniskillen. I do not try to justify yesterday's bombing. I regret very much that it occurred."⁵ Adams' statement came as somewhat of a surprise because he rarely engaged in publicly denouncing the actions of the IRA. Despite Adams' censure, the IRA quickly took credit for the bombing while at the same time trying to deflect some of the blame,

² Ibid.

³ *Irish Times*, 11 November 1987.

⁴ *Irish Times*, 9 November, 12 November 1987.

⁵ *Irish Times*, 10 November 1987.

claiming in a public statement that electronic interference generated by the British army prematurely triggered the bomb. Yet, forensics teams examined the remains of the bomb and came to the conclusion that an electronic timer was used as a detonator and that it was “‘highly unlikely’ that this would have been combined with a remote-controlled device as the IRA had claimed.”⁶

Outrage toward the Enniskillen bombing also came from pulpits of all religious denominations across the island. Many Irish churches held special memorial services the following Sunday for the victims of Enniskillen. In Dublin over 4,000 people attended a service at St. Patrick’s that included a special collection for the people of Enniskillen. Notable attendees included Taoiseach Charles Haughey and the Church of Ireland Bishop of Clogher, Dr. Brian Hannon whose diocese included Enniskillen. Dr. Hannon had the honor of preaching at the Dublin memorial service. Although he was certainly disgusted by the events on 9 November, Hannon took the opportunity to repeat to the Dublin audience the message he communicated at one of the funerals for the Enniskillen dead the previous week; “Remembrance Sunday might yet be seen as a turning point in the history of Northern Ireland, when people consciously rejected violence and made a conscious decision ‘to create a future together.’”⁷ Hannon’s comments appear almost prophetic as they begin to describe the ensuing years in the Republic as well as the North in regards to future Remembrance Days and the memory of the Great War. In Belfast a number of churches held similar memorial services, several of which drew attendance comparable to

⁶ *Irish Times*, 19 November 1987.

⁷ *Irish Times*, 11 November 1987.

the Dublin service. Even a number of the Catholic Churches in west Belfast took the opportunity to denounce the violence in Enniskillen. In these congregations, not everyone received the message favorably and some people walked out of the services, but these were a minority of the attending churchgoers.⁸

Elsewhere, a number of other private and public events took place throughout Ireland in the wake of the Enniskillen bombing. A week later, on 15 November, in Derry about 100 people observed two minutes of silence during a brief ceremony of remembrance at the Diamond War Memorial. That same day, one minute of silence was observed at 6pm throughout southern Irish cities and communities, including O'Connell Street in Dublin's City Center, bringing that busy corridor to a brief standstill.⁹ On 20 November, a candle-lit procession took place in Dun Laoghaire following an ecumenical service at St. Michael's Catholic Church.¹⁰ Additionally, a group of noted Irish authors and dramatists put on a special event in Enniskillen where they read excerpts from their work. Notable attendees included Jennifer Johnston, resident of Derry and author of *How Many Miles To Babylon?* and Frank McGuinness, who wrote the popular play *Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching Towards the Somme*.¹¹

One of the most passionate responses to Enniskillen came from Irish rock band U2, who were on tour in the United States when the bombing occurred. Footage of a live performance following the bombing was released for the band's film *Rattle and Hum* and

⁸ *Irish Times*, 16 November 1987.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Irish Times*, 20 November 1987.

¹¹ *Irish Times*, 21 November 1987.

the accompanying soundtrack. Triggered by the events in Enniskillen, frontman Bono launched into a rant during the song “Sunday Bloody Sunday” where he vehemently vilified the IRA and the “revolution,” and emphatically stated, “Fuck the revolution!” He also criticized Irish-America for buying into the republican concept of Irishness and the idea of dying for the revolution, while at the same time looking the other way when killing was done in the name of a revolution that most Irish people did not support. On Enniskillen, Bono said, “Where’s the glory in bombing a Remembrance Day parade of old age pensioners, their medals taken out and polished up for the day. Where’s the glory in that?”¹² U2 were the obvious successors to the Clancys as shapers of Irish culture and identity in Ireland and throughout the Irish diaspora, and their stance on Irish issues and society differed from the standard nationalistic tropes that existed in the Clancys’ early recordings and were so influential with North American audiences. Therefore, the band’s strong denunciation of IRA violence and implicit support of Remembrance Day activities carried considerable significance.

While the Enniskillen bomb had a tragic effect on that town, in wider context the bombing brought a new awareness to the meaning and purpose of Remembrance Day and its most recognizable symbol, the poppy—a mainstay of vernacular Great War memory. Republican opposition to the poppy dated back to the early 1920s when it was first introduced as a symbol of remembrance for the Great War and a source of income for the British Legion. For Republicans in the Irish Free State, the poppy represented British jingoism. Although the poppy was a symbol of remembrance for the Irish ex-service community, it was an overtly political symbol for republicans who saw the scarlet flower

¹² U2 (Musical group), *Rattle and Hum* (New York, NY: Island Records, 1988).

as a challenge to the very existence of the Free State by expressing support for their former oppressors.¹³ This view persisted for many years and only started to change in the closing decades of the twentieth century.

Poppies

Three years prior to Enniskillen, in 1984, *Irish Times* journalist Fergus Pyle wrote an article about the poppy as a “symbol of Irish reconciliation.” Covering the annual ecumenical Remembrance Day service in Dublin, Pyle reported on the sermon by Father Austin Flannery, who said that wearing a poppy “posed some difficulty for him.” The problem was not with the flower itself, but the meaning behind the symbol, which many Irish men and women associated with Britain and oppression. However, during the course of his sermon, he suggested that what differentiated the Irish and the British was ideology, not their humanity. Flannery also recognized that the purpose of Remembrance Day was not to espouse support for a given political agenda but to recognize and reflect on the loss sustained by so many people over the course of the twentieth century. Therefore, as an Irishman, he considered the wearing of the poppy, the external symbol of these sacrifices, as a “small reconciliatory gesture.”¹⁴

In succeeding years, the wearing of the poppy in the Republic became a topic of much discussion. In December 1987, Una O’Higgins O’Malley, the daughter of former Irish Minister for Justice Kevin O’Higgins, wrote to the *Irish Times* in response to the assertion in an earlier piece that her father would have refused to wear a poppy on

¹³ Brian Hanley, “Poppy Day in the '20s and '30s,” *History Ireland*, 7:1 (1999), 5-6.

¹⁴ *Irish Times*, 12 November 1984.

Remembrance Day based on his opposition to the Merrion Square site for the Irish National War Memorial.¹⁵ While it was true that O'Higgins recognized the leaders of the Easter Rising and the men who fought in the wars of independence as the military forces that formed the basic foundation of the state, he harbored no ill will toward the veterans of the Great War. And although he opposed the plan to erect a Great War memorial in Merrion Square, he reminded members of the Dáil that two of his brothers served in the British Army during the war and one was killed in action.¹⁶ Furthermore, his daughter noted that her mother bought poppies every year "out of respect for my father's brothers who fought in that war and because of the humanitarian work of the British Legion."¹⁷

In 1988, Gay Byrne, host of "The Late Late Show" in Ireland, created controversy when he announced his intention to wear a poppy during the 11 November 1988 broadcast of the show. Byrne's father served in the British army during the war as a member of the 19th Hussars and saw action at the Somme and Ypres, and six of his brothers served and survived the war, too.¹⁸ Byrne's declaration, which was made during an appearance on RTE Radio 1 earlier that day, provoked a number of complaints from

¹⁵ Kevin O'Higgins was a member of Cumann na nGaedhael and served as Vice-President of the Executive Council and Minister for Justice in the newly formed Free State government. In 1926, British Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin invited William Cosgrave, president of the Executive Council in the Free State, to the unveiling of a memorial to the British war dead at Westminster Abbey. Cosgrave respectfully declined to attend and sent O'Higgins to represent the Free State. At the ceremony O'Higgins laid a wreath to commemorate the Irish war dead. O'Higgins was assassinated by anti-treaty IRA forces on 10 July 1927 while on his way to Mass.

¹⁶ Keith Jeffery, *Ireland and the Great War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 114.

¹⁷ *Irish Times*, 29 December 1987.

¹⁸ Gay Byrne with Deirdre Purcell, *The Time of my Life: An Autobiography* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1989), 5. All seven Byrne men returned to Ireland after the war, although the youngest brother died from mustard gas poisoning about a year after returning. Byrne also tells that his grandfather received a £10 annuity for sending so many sons to the front.

RTE listeners. Most of the forty calls received, low by RTE standards, disagreed with Byrne's plan, but "The Late Late Show" also received a number of calls supporting Byrne. However, upon further reflection Byrne decided to renege on his promise to wear a poppy on television because he feared doing so might "cause dissention and rows and misunderstanding."¹⁹ This situation demonstrates the continued sensitivity of the republican Irish national identity to challenging concepts of Irishness, even at a time when most almost all of the Irish veterans had died. Although influenced by a vocal minority not to wear a poppy on television, the entire situation generated a considerable deal of publicity for the British Legion's Poppy Appeal in Ireland. Sales of poppies in Dublin were up "enormously" to about 40,000 sold that year, an increase of about ten percent. Individuals and groups purchased several hundred wreaths during the 1988 Poppy Appeal as well. The Legion had to request additional supplies from England in order to keep pace with demand. One poppy seller outside the Dublin Remembrance Day Service at St. Patrick's said, "I can't get the money into the box. It's the first time I've had that complaint. Gay Byrne has done wonders for us."²⁰ Lt. Col. Brian Clarke, chairman of the Royal British Legion in the south, attributed the increase in poppy sales to the added attention brought to Remembrance Day and the poppy in the past two years by the Enniskillen bombing and Gay Byrne.²¹

¹⁹ *Irish Times*, 12 November 1988.

²⁰ *Irish Times*, 14 November 1988.

²¹ *Irish Times*, 12 November 1988.

Virtually every year newspaper articles addressed the poppy in Ireland, either favorably or unfavorably, and generated a wide array of discussion by way of letters to the editor. Some people viewed the poppy as a symbol of peace and reconciliation while others continued to associate the poppy with the British army, despite the fact that the British Legion was and remains a charitable organization. Some of these letters contained personal anecdotes about family members' service in one of the world wars and in some cases their post-war lives in Ireland. On the heels of the eightieth anniversary of the Battle of the Somme, Kevin Myers wrote how a Northern Irish news anchor for the BBC refused to wear either a poppy or a shamrock because of the associations they carried with the public. He pointed out that the poppy was not intended to celebrate victory at war or a political agenda, but rather to raise money for charity, unlike the Easter Lily, the floral symbol of Irish republicanism that often draws comparison to the poppy. Therefore, the poppy is only a divisive symbol to those who fail to understand its history and choose to see it as such.²²

A poppy controversy once again jumped to the forefront of Irish consciousness in the Republic when the eighth president of Ireland, Mary McAleese was sworn into office on 11 November 1997.²³ Given the significance of that date, the British Legion asked the president-elect to wear a poppy during her inauguration. While McAleese promised to consider the proposal, two of her Ministers publicly advised against the move because doing so would set an unwanted precedent and because the poppy retained different

²² *Irish Times*, 2 November 1996.

²³ Mary McAleese was the first president of the Republic to hail from the North. She was born in Belfast.

meanings among various constituencies throughout the country.²⁴ McAleese ultimately decided not to wear a poppy during her inauguration, but did opt to attend the Remembrance Service at St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin. The British Legion stated that they were not surprised by the decision and stressed "the Legion had said it would be a 'nice gesture' for her to wear a poppy on the occasion, but had put no pressure on her."²⁵ The request was made with the full understanding that the Irish president did not formally wear any symbol other than a shamrock. The poppy continued to be a complex symbol in Ireland, but recent discourse generated by the little red flower has created a greater awareness of its original meaning and intent. While this has not completely eliminated the stigma placed upon it in some areas, inroads have been made toward expressing appreciation and understanding for the poppy in Ireland across the political divide.

The process of remembering Ireland's contributions in the First World War was not limited to the events at Enniskillen and the resurgence of the poppy. Other components of vernacular memory garnered attention, too. For example, by the mid-1980s the Irish National War Memorial (INWM) at Islandbridge was in disrepair. However, the INWM benefitted from increased public and government attention to Ireland's Great War heritage throughout the decade. Islandbridge's revival marks an important point that saw the state become involved with the project for the first time in over fifty years. The Office of Public Works planned rehabilitation schemes for the park as early as 1985, but work commenced only after it slipped further into decline in 1987. The perpetually optimistic Trustees from the Irish National War Memorial Trust helped

²⁴ *Irish Times*, 4 November, 5 November 1997.

²⁵ *Irish Times*, 6 November 1997.

to bankroll the park's revitalization, which commenced with building a fence to establish boundaries and keep out the undesirables that had helped cause and exacerbate the park's decay. Following the park's enclosure, work progressed quickly and within a year the grounds were improved, the fountains flowed once again and trees were replanted. The Lutyens' Temple, which had been part of the original design but never constructed because of lack of funding, was finished in 1994 and opened by Minister for Finance and Fianna Fáil member Bertie Ahern, whose presence represented the changes occurring in official war memory. By the mid-1990s the only piece missing from Lutyens' original design was the pedestrian bridge over the Liffey. The gap between official and vernacular memory of the Great War continued to decrease when Taoiseach John Bruton of Fine Gael led a commemorative service for the dead of the Second World War at the INWM in 1995. During the fiftieth anniversary of the Second War's end, the Irish government inserted itself into the broader trend of Euro-American remembrance of that conflict. Demonstrating a common European or North Atlantic identity proved important for Ireland's booming economy, and at the same time made the Irish more open to non-traditional conceptions of Irishness.

Popular Culture and the Memory of the Great War

At the beginning of this period, however, vernacular memory remained the primary means for remembering the First World War. By 1987, literature, for example, proved to be a useful and fruitful, but by no means the only cultural medium for re-appropriating the use of Great War memory in Ireland. Since 1987, a number of cultural events took place that brought more awareness to those advocating Great War memory in

Ireland. The County Library in Ennis, County Clare put together a public exhibition called “Clare and the Great War 1914-18” in 1988. Ironically, housed in the de Valera library in Clare, the exhibition consisted of thirty-seven display panels, which contained over 150 photographs, press cuttings, graphic displays, and reproductions from the war years. The project came together through the collaboration of many in the community. The Western Front Association and the Irish Archive made donations to the exhibit for the World Wars, as did local citizens. Historians Martin Staunton and Jane Leonard helped to construct the exhibition and took time to answer the public’s questions. Originally set up in Ennis, the exhibit proved popular and the county library system ensured that residents throughout Clare had access to the exhibition, which traveled to branch libraries in Kilrush, Newmarket-on-Fergus, Shannon, and Ennistymon in late 1988 and early 1989.²⁶

Convergence between the vernacular and official memory of the war occurred gradually during the annual Remembrance Sunday services. One reason for this was that the presence of hitherto absent Irish politicians, on both sides of the border, at these services raised their profile. In 1993, Mary Robinson became the first sitting Irish president to attend the Dublin Remembrance Day service at St. Patrick’s Cathedral.²⁷ The president, in line with official protocol, did not wear a poppy to the service but her husband, Nicholas Robinson did. A number of other government officials attended the

²⁶ *Irish Times*, 15 November, 29 November 1988.

²⁷ Robinson served as President of the Republic from 1990 to 1997. Although an Independent, she had the support of the Labour Party when she was elected to the office of president. She is the first woman and first politician not affiliated with Fianna Fáil to hold that office.

ceremony as well, but few did so in an official representative manner. The current Taoiseach, Albert Reynolds (Fianna Fáil), chose not to attend the ceremony and his office explained that, since its creation, the Taoiseach attended the National Day of Commemoration in July to honor all the Irish men and women who fought in armed conflicts, both global or domestic.²⁸ Nevertheless, President Robinson set an important precedent for her office. She continued to attend future Remembrance Day services, as did her successor, Mary McAleese, who represented Fianna Fáil during her first term and attended for the first time as President-elect in 1997.²⁹

Slowly, but surely, the “national amnesia” in the Republic relating to Ireland’s participation in the First World War began to abate. In some ways this shift can be related to Ireland’s heightened position in the European Union as a result of the Celtic Tiger economic boom. This period of economic prosperity immersed Ireland in the European and international community in ways not previously possible. By starting to reconcile their role in the Great War, the Irish government essentially showed that Ireland “paid their dues” to Europe, just like the other belligerent nations, in one the most traumatic events of European history. Broader acceptance of the war not only occurred in the government, but throughout the Irish population. In 1993, the *Irish Times* interviewed two Catholic students from Clongowes College in County Kildare who attended the Enniskillen Remembrance Day ceremony sporting poppies. Since 1987, the Jesuit school

²⁸ *Irish Times*, 12 November, 15 November 1993.

²⁹ *Irish Times*, 11 November, 13 November 1995, 8 November, 10 November 1997, 10 November 2003.

President McAleese represented Fianna Fáil in her first term as Irish president from 1997-2004, and was re-elected as an independent in 2004.

was “twinned” with the Portora Royal School in Enniskillen and Clongowes students attended the November ceremony in Enniskillen annually. Monaghan native and Clongowes student Garrett O’Gorman explained his wearing of the poppy: “It’s to commemorate all the people who died in World War One, not just the people from Britain and Northern Ireland, but those from the South who died as well.”³⁰ The Enniskillen bombing and other contemporary events contributed to the rediscovery of Ireland’s role in the Great War by Ireland’s youth.

In the 1990s, several new building projects were undertaken, domestically and internationally, with the expressed goal of raising awareness of Ireland’s Great War contributions. The largest and most significant new project was the establishment and opening of the Somme Heritage Centre in Newtownards, County Down, Northern Ireland. Funding for the project, which cost £1M, came from local, national, and international sources, including an appeal from Princess Alice, Duchess of Gloucester, the European Union, and the International Fund for Ireland.³¹ The Centre aimed to honor all the men and women from Ireland who participated in the First World War, and two northern survivors of the Battle of the Somme attended the opening of the Centre, in March 1994. Having the word “Somme” in the center’s title and its location in the north might appear as a front for perpetuating the heroic myths of the 36th (Ulster) Division, yet the Centre did not. While the Centre’s employees recognized that there was only so much that could be done to subvert the engrained mythology surrounding the 36th Division in Northern Ireland, a conscious effort was made to stress the involvement of people from

³⁰ *Irish Times*, 15 November 1993.

³¹ *Irish Times*, 22 March 1994.

all Irish geographic regions, classes, and traditions. The Centre used contemporary artifacts and recreated scenes to communicate the challenges and horrors men in the trenches faced during the First World War. And while the Centre was a commemorative environment in its own right, its curators preserved, and in some cases restored, Rolls of Honor and other memorials from Northern Irish churches. In a newspaper column on the Somme Centre, Kevin Myers explained how the Centre awakened an interest in the war on the part of Northern Catholics. As one employee recalled to Myers, a group of schoolboys from West Belfast, a predominantly republican area of the city, visited the Centre and a number of them brought war medals earned by family members during the war.³² The fact that these people kept the medals in the family for so many decades further demonstrated the divide between public and private commemoration and the uneasy relationship between different concepts of Irish identity and nationalism. Clearly, veteran's families appreciated and respected the sacrifices made by their loved ones, but were unable to communicate those sentiments for decades at a time. The Somme Centre, therefore, functioned as both an educational and a commemorative experience.

Other changes were afoot in the realm of vernacular memory of the Great War in the 1990s. In popular music Shane MacGowan was responsible for another song that tangentially addresses the First World War, "A Pair of Brown Eyes." A British musician of Irish heritage with a major interest in Irish folk and traditional music, the song was recorded by MacGowan's band The Pogues in 1985. The song tells the story of a heartbroken young man who goes to the pub where he encounters a war veteran

³² *Irish Times*, 26 August 1995; David Officer, "Re-presenting war: the Somme Heritage Centre," *History Ireland* 3, no. 1 (1995): 38-42.

recounting the horrors of war. During the course of the song the young man realizes that the pain he feels over his recent break-up is the same pain felt by the veteran over the course of his entire life as a result of his war service. MacGowen never specified which war the old veteran took part in, the First or Second World War. The song, however, took on a specific association with the First World War thanks to Irish balladeer Christy Moore.³³ Often a cultural commentator through his music, Moore's political sympathies often aligned with Irish republicans. In the same year that The Pogues released "A Pair of Brown Eyes," Moore released an album titled *The Spirit of Freedom*, which consisted of republican songs, including two written by deceased hunger-striker Bobby Sands. Yet a mere ten years later, while playing a show in Belgium in 1995, Moore described a visit earlier in the day to the Menin Gate Memorial. Moore explained that his great uncle fought and fell in the First World War and that he had seen his uncle's name on the war memorial. He also made a connection between the death and destruction of the First World War and the despair of the war veteran in MacGowan's song. Finally, before playing the song, Moore dedicated it to his great uncle, Joe Sheeran.³⁴

A more permanent example of cross-political and cross-sectarian efforts at reconciliation and mutual understanding came to fruition in 1998. A new war memorial, intentionally conceived as a way to bring attention to shared aspects of Irish history

³³ "The Parting Glass: Rum, Sodomy, and the Lash," <http://www.poguetry.com/rsl.htm>; Pogues, *Rum, Sodomy & the Lash* (Burbank, Calif: WEA/Rhino, 1985). It is also interesting to note that the Pogues included a version of the song "The Recruiting Sargeant" (see Chapter 3) on this same album.

³⁴ Christy Moore, *The Box Set 1964 – 2004* (London: SONY The Entertainment Network, 2004), disc three, "Intro" and "Brown Eyes (for Joe Sheeran);" see also the response to the author's question on Christy Moore's website from a message dated 3 February 2010 at <http://www.christymoore.com/guestbook/index.php>.

between the north and the south using the First World War was erected in Belgium.

Unveiled in 1998, the Island of Ireland Peace Tower at Messines Ridge stood as one of the boldest statements to how far the Irish had progressed in coming to terms with their military past fighting with the British Army. The dedication of the tower occurred on 11 November 1998 and the three heads of state from Ireland, Britain, and Belgium attended—Mary McAleese, Queen Elizabeth II, and King Albert II, respectively.

Planners selected Messines Ridge for symbolic purposes. The 36th (Ulster) Division and 16th (Irish) Division fought together at Messines Ridge, a battle considered a victory by First World War standards. Historian Keith Jeffery suggested that locating the memorial at Langemarck, where both Divisions fought together but were defeated, might be more appropriate.³⁵ However, focusing on the positive aspects of the collective work of these divisions provided a more stable base for moving forward. Each division lost men in both engagements, but more fell at Langemarck. Choosing to center the commemoration at Messines Ridge implicitly holds additional emphasis for both the survivors and victims of the battle, thus honoring the entire spectrum of Irish involvement.

The tower was initially conceived by the Journey of Reconciliation Trust, a cross-border initiative headed by Glen Barr, a Derry loyalist, and Paddy Harte, TD from County Donegal.³⁶ The organization's primary goal was to use the memory of Ireland's Great War dead as a means to bring about peace and reconciliation in Ireland, especially among Ireland's youth. In devising the project and moving it forward, the Trust was

³⁵ Jeffery, 138.

³⁶ In February 1999, Harte and Barr were jointly honored as European of the Year for 1998 as a result of their work on the Island of Ireland Peace Park. *Irish Times*, 23 February 1999.

responsible for determining the site of the Tower and acquiring the land, which it did for £20,000 in March 1998. This was done shortly before the Good Friday Agreement was signed in April 1998, which brought increased significance to the memorial project. During construction the Trust recruited young Irish people from all traditions to help build the tower and to provide continued work and maintenance after its unveiling. Like so many war memorials built before it, the Peace Tower came at a great expense, almost £500,000, and in 1999, Barr stated that they required an additional £500,000 to finish the park. The Irish government contributed £150,000 from surpluses of the Irish Sailors' and Soldiers' Land Trust, which was in the process of being officially wound up.³⁷ In the first few years immediately following the park's opening a number of problems emerged tied to the land on which the memorial was constructed. As a result, much of the landscaping had to be redone.³⁸ By the time the park was deemed finished in 2001, all three governments involved with the memorial—Irish, British, and Belgian—expressed an interest in assuming responsibility of the park to ensure it was properly maintained. Originally, the Irish and Northern Irish governments came to an agreement in which the

³⁷ Ireland, Dáil, *Debates*, Vol. 483, 25 November, 1997, col. 486.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Jack Straw, made the following announcement on 27 February 2006 regarding the future of the ISSLT: "I am today announcing the winding up of the Irish Sailors and Soldiers Land Trust (ISSLT) in accordance with the Irish Sailors and Soldiers Land Trust Act 1987. The ISSLT was founded in 1922 to provide support for Irish First World War veterans and their dependants. In 1997 my predecessor gave direction to commence the final winding up of the Trust. This process has now been completed. The residual assets and liabilities of the ISSLT will now be taken forward by the Milibern Trust which has managed the day to day running of ISSLT holdings since 2001 and will continue to use the assets for the benefit of all Irish ex-service personnel in need and their dependants," http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200506/cmhansrd/vo060227/wmstext/60227m02.htm#60227m02.html_spm1.

³⁸ *Irish Times*, 26 August 2000. By December 1999, the Irish Government pledged an additional £50,000 toward continued maintenance for the park. Ireland, Dáil, *Debates*, Vol. 512, 8 December 1999, col. 977.

Republic's Office of Public Works and the North's Construction Service would jointly care for the park for a period of twenty-seven years. However, within a few years these responsibilities were contracted out to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, an agreement that continues to the present.³⁹

The monument took the form of a pre-Reformation Irish round tower in order “to avoid any sectarian connotations.”⁴⁰ The building materials for the 110 foot tower consisted of stones from a former British Army barracks in Tipperary and limestone blocks shipped from Mullingar, County Westmeath. The tower was designed so that the only time the inside was illuminated by the sun was on the eleventh hour, of the eleventh day, of the eleventh month—the time of the Armistice in 1918.⁴¹

The Peace Tower project highlights the progress made toward reclaiming the memory of the island's war dead because it received patronage from a broad spectrum of Irish people from the local level all the way to the highest offices of government. After its official opening, various groups from Ireland used the Peace Park for their own events. Almost 1,000 people—about 100 from Ireland, including the Lord Mayors of Dublin and Belfast, Dermot Lacey and Alex Maskey—joined in a peace walk fundraiser to the Peace Park in an effort to raise money for a peace school established near the park. Furthermore, President McAleese showed continued support for the project when she again visited in 2004 while in Belgium to recognize the anniversary of the beginning of

³⁹ *Belfast Telegraph*, 23 March 1998, 21 February 2001; *Irish Times*, 13 April 1999, 10 November 1999, 8 June 2004.

⁴⁰ Jeffery, 140.

⁴¹ The British Broadcasting Corporation, “Ireland's fallen saluted,” 11 November 1998, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/212208.stm>; *Irish Times*, 11 November 1997, 17 July 1998.

the Third Battle of Ypres, and, in front of a crowd of about 350 she laid a wreath on the park's round tower.⁴² In the conception and execution of the Peace Tower plan, it is possible to see the gradual process of ending the "amnesia" about the First World War in southern Ireland. What began as simple acknowledgement of the shared history between Irish traditions, turned into a pro-active commemorative project, and once that was completed, the continued patronization of the memorial park by northerners and southerners alike. The memorial embodied a transnational Irish identity, one that honored the now largely deceased veterans without threatening the Republic's self image.

The Shot at Dawn Campaign⁴³ provides an example of another popular movement that eventually received government support in the Republic. At the center of the campaign in Ireland were twenty-six Irish-born soldiers who were court-martialed and executed for violations of military law, such as cowardice and desertion, during the First World War. The campaign's ultimate goal was to procure pardons for these Irish soldiers, as well as 280 other men from the British army who suffered the same early morning fate during the course of the war. Supporters of the campaign cited ethnic bias against Irish troops and the failure of military personnel to recognize medical conditions, both documented and undocumented, as two of the main reasons that these men suffered such quick trials and fatal sentences. The numbers tend to support the purported anti-Irish bias, as about one in fifty men in the British army during the war was Irish, yet one in thirteen

⁴² *Irish Times*, 14 September 2002, 8 June 2004.

⁴³ See the campaign's official website at: <http://www.shotatdawncampaignirl.org/>.

of the men executed at dawn came from Ireland.⁴⁴ Furthermore, the Shot at Dawn Campaign functioned as an opportunity for reconciliation in Ireland because the men in question represented a broad cross section of Irish society, including unionists, nationalists, Protestants, Catholics, veterans, fresh recruits, urban denizens, and rural farmers.⁴⁵

The Irish branch of the Shot at Dawn Campaign was the first Irish organization to question the equity of the courts martial and their imposed sentences. Dermot Ahern (Fianna Fáil), Irish Minister of Foreign Affairs, defended the campaign against those who saw it as an attempt to re-write history, stating, “[t]he offences for which these men were executed were the subject of controversy at the time, and no longer carried the death penalty 10 years after the war.” After the war many ex-soldiers advocated for changing military policy in regards to executions and The British Army and Air Force Act 1930 accomplished that by abolishing execution as an acceptable form of discipline for most offences.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, the British government resisted any admission of wrong doing throughout the twentieth century. In 1998, the British government commissioned an inquiry into the issue and determined that no action was necessary on their part.⁴⁷ The Irish branch of the Shot at Dawn Campaign, founded in June 2002, managed to quickly gain the support of the Irish government. By November of that year, Minister of Foreign

⁴⁴ *Irish Times*, 11 November 2005.

⁴⁵ Stephen Walker, *Forgotten Soldiers: The Irishmen Shot at Dawn* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 2007), 7-8.

⁴⁶ *Irish Times*, 11 November 2005, 15 November 2003; Dáil Éireann, Vol. 557, 11 December 2003, col. 91.

⁴⁷ Walker, 4.

Affairs, Brian Cowan (Fianna Fáil), broached the subject in the Dáil and sought to gain additional information on the matter.⁴⁸ In Belfast in 2004, the Lord Mayor Martin Morgan (Social Democratic and Labour Party), also supported the Shot at Dawn Campaign and asked Belfast citizens to come to City Hall where they could sign a cross-border petition supporting the cause.⁴⁹ Interest and support from both Irish governments undoubtedly gave the campaign added weight and placed additional pressure on the British authorities to revisit the issue. In November 2006, the British government issued pardons for all 306 executed men.⁵⁰

In Northern Ireland, the government always played a part in the commemoration of the First World War, but these ceremonies received additional attention with the election of Sinn Fein politicians to the office of Lord Mayor. Alex Maskey became the first republican Lord Mayor of Belfast in 2002. That same year he stirred up controversy among Northern Republicans when he laid a laurel wreath during a ceremony commemorating the Battle of the Somme at Belfast's City Hall.⁵¹ Maskey did not attend the main ceremony, instead choosing to lay the wreath two hours before it began. The Lord Mayor defended his decision by pointing out that the government has a responsibility to its constituents "to consider properly and carefully how do we in a civic

⁴⁸ Ireland, Dáil, *Debates*, Vol. 556, 5 November 2002, col. 716.

⁴⁹ *Belfast Telegraph*, 22 April 2004.

⁵⁰ House of Commons, 7 November 2006, col. 766-767, accessed online at <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200506/cmhansrd/vo061107/debtext/61107-0011.htm>; "Shot at Dawn Campaign Irl," <http://www.shotatdawncampaignirl.org/>; *Belfast Telegraph*, 18 February 2008.

⁵¹ The British Broadcasting Corporation, "Maskey marks Somme with wreath," 1 July 2002, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/northern_ireland/2076528.stm.

way pay our respects to those who died.”⁵² Maskey also laid a wreath on Remembrance Sunday while he was Lord Mayor of Belfast. This action provoked a response from his Sinn Fein colleagues, who passed a ban on attending Remembrance Day services at the party’s 2004 Ard Fheis, although Maskey later claimed that the policy would not top Sinn Fein from trying to reach out to the unionist community and “the party executive took a neutral stance on the issue.”⁵³ In 2008, another Sinn Fein Lord Mayor, Tom Hartley, laid a wreath to commemorate the Battle of the Somme, but drew criticism from unionists when he was unable to attend the Remembrance Sunday service due to engagements previously scheduled in the Republic.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, the willingness of both Maskey and Hartley to participate in any of these ceremonies points to a greater understanding of Ireland’s role in the war by northern nationalists as well as a recognition that the Great War provided a potential avenue toward more stable relationships between everyone in the north.

In many ways, the poppy stood as a synecdoche of the impact that government officials and cultural contributors had on changing attitudes toward the war in the south. Fr. Martin Clarke summed up the place of the poppy in Irish society at the Dublin

⁵² The British Broadcasting Corporation, “Maskey defends Somme decision,” 27 June 2002, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/northern_ireland/2069296.stm.

⁵³ *Belfast Telegraph*, “Maskey asked to forge new links,” 1 March 2004, <http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/imported/maskey-asked-to--forge-new-links-13667328.html>; “Row after SF mayor fails to attend Poppy Day service,” 17 November 2005, <http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/imported/row-after-sf-mayor-fails-to-attend--poppy-day-service-13739882.html>.

⁵⁴ *Belfast Telegraph*, “Sinn Fein mayor set to lay Somme wreath,” 20 June 2008, <http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/local-national/sinn-fein-mayor-set-to-lay-somme-wreath-13895834.html>; “Belfast’s Sinn Fein Mayor will be absent from Remembrance,” 7 November 2008 <http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/local-national/belfastrsquos-sinn-fein-mayor-will-be-absent-from-remembrance-14043528.html>.

Remembrance Day service in 2005, saying “rather than reinforcing division, the poppy may be seen as a valid recognition of the heroism, generosity, and self-sacrifice of tens of thousands of Irish soldiers in the World Wars of the 20th century” and that ““for complex cultural and historical reasons’ there was ‘a sense in which it is still taboo to wear a poppy in Ireland at this time of year, despite the insights of historians and commentators who have greatly helped us to understand in a new way the nature and extent of Irish troops in both World Wars.” Clarke credited the writings of Kevin Myers and various cultural contributions, notably Frank McGuinness’ *Observe the Sons of Ulster*, for addressing this issue. Furthermore, he asserted that it was nigh time to recognize that having two separate and oppositional national histories serves the forces of division and that in order to move forward the Irish people need to recognize how everything in the nation’s past shaped the present.⁵⁵ This was not only true of the divisions between northern loyalists and southern republicans, but also of those divisions between southern republicans and the ex-service community’s Irish national identity. In 2009, the Poppy Appeal in Northern Ireland surpassed the £1 million mark for the first time.⁵⁶

Accessibility to the history of the Great War has increased significantly in recent years. The digitization of “Ireland’s Memorial Records 1914-18,” the compiled Roll of Honor for all of Ireland’s war dead in the early 1920s, took another step toward making the memory of the war available to a broader audience. Eneclann, a publisher affiliated

⁵⁵ *Irish Times*, 14 November 2005.

⁵⁶ *Belfast Telegraph*, 23 December 2009, <http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/breaking-news/uk-ireland/poppy-appeal-in-northern-ireland-breaks-pound1m-barrier-14609389.html>.

with Trinity College, Dublin, undertook the task of digitizing each volume of the Records, which contains about 49,400 names, and making them completely searchable. A special event launch was held at Islandbridge in January 2005. One of the greatest benefits of the digitization project is increased diffusion of the contents of the original manuscript. Previously, only a handful of complete copies of the Memorial Records existed and those were difficult to find and use. The Irish National War Memorial at Islandbridge housed a full set, but the use of it directly correlated to one's ability to visit the memorial. With exact replications stored on a single CD-ROM, educational institutions and private citizens can easily acquire the Memorial Records and use them at their leisure. Although the records are not completely accurate, the focus of the project was to preserve the original work, not to amend it. Omissions and errors also provide avenues for further research on the part of historians or curious family members.⁵⁷

In late 2006, the National Museum of Ireland at Collins Barracks opened a new permanent exhibition titled "Soldiers and Chiefs: The Irish at War at Home and Abroad from 1550."⁵⁸ This highly interactive exhibition contains a wealth of information on all Irish military activities in the given time period, including the First World War, and took four years of preparation and about €12M to complete.⁵⁹ The material covering the Great War is not sequestered within the exhibit, and, instead, it is interspersed with contemporaneous domestic affairs such as the Easter Rising, and the Anglo-Irish and

⁵⁷ *Irish Times*, 25 January 2005; Irish National War Memorial, *Ireland's Memorial Records [Electronic Resource]: World War I, 1914-1918* (Dublin: Enclann, 2005).

⁵⁸ "Companion to the exhibition 'Soldiers And Chiefs: The Irish at war at home and abroad from 1550,'" (Dublin: National Museum of Ireland, 2007). Further information on the exhibition can also be found at: <http://www.museum.ie/en/exhibition/soldiers-and-chiefs.aspx>.

⁵⁹ *Irish Times*, 10 November 2006.

Irish Civil wars that immediately succeeded the First World War. This manner of presentation highlights the inter-connectedness of all of these events and places the First World War within its proper context in Irish history. The relationship between the Great War and the Rising is again reiterated at the exhibition's final display, which reads:

Remembering April 24th – May 12th 1916

During these 19 days over 1200 Irish men and women died in Dublin, in France and elsewhere, as a result of war. Some were killed trying to free their country from oppression, others fell believing they were supporting the cause of civilisation against the forces of barbarism. A number were Irish civilians who became unintended victims of the Easter Rising. Most were not heroes, but ordinary people in the midst of unimaginable conflict. Their names must stand for the many others who died in Ireland and around the world over the last 450 years.

This sign sits directly outside a dark room with a TV monitor that displays a scrolling list of names of those who died in the aforementioned period. The names are arranged by day and then in alphabetical order, and the location of death is also recorded, e.g. Dublin, Flanders, etc. It comes a little surprise that an exhibition on Irish military history also takes on the guise of a site of memory and reconciliation. In April 2007, on a visit to Dublin, Rev. Ian Paisley visited the "Soldiers and Chiefs" exhibit with the Republic's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dermot Ahern, and paid special attention to the First World War displays.⁶⁰ As the "Soldiers and Chiefs" exhibit demonstrates, Irish military history is a complex, yet richly representative component of the country's past because so many Irish men and women served in a wide array of military capacities for numerous political allegiances.

Islandbridge was not the only Irish war memorial to undergo re-examination during this time period. In Cork, the city's war memorial underwent a complete

⁶⁰ *Irish Times*, 19 April 2007.

refurbishment in 2006. New, legible panels replaced the faded, engraved names on the plinth of the memorial, and decorative lighting enhanced the memorial park in the city's South Mall. Commencing in 2007, the Diamond War Memorial Project (DWMP) in Derry quickly made significant inroads towards reclaiming the Maiden City's full contribution to the Great War. While conducting research on the soldiers whose names appear on the Diamond memorial, local historian Trevor Temple discovered that almost half of the names belonged to Catholics. Hitherto, most people in Derry assumed that the vast majority of the war dead were members of Derry's Protestant community. This new information enabled both unionist and nationalist communities in Derry to accept their contributions to the Great War and to view the Diamond monument as a shared memorial. Furthermore, Temple discovered an additional 400 names of men whose names were left off of the memorial. In many cases these men were not included simply because they had no one to submit their name for consideration or they did not meet the stringent requirements for inclusion set forth by the original war memorial committee. Furthermore, the DWMP successfully managed to get the gates around the memorial opened to the public; Historically, vandalism resulted in limited access. The DWMP received financial support from the Holywell Trust and Heritage Lottery on local and national levels, respectively. Most recently, the Project became a finalist for The National Lottery Awards in the category of Best Heritage Project in 2008.⁶¹

⁶¹ For more information on the Diamond War Memorial Project, visit <http://www.diamondwarmemorial.com>.

Literature

Within the milieu of reconciliation and rediscovery since 1987, a number of novels have appeared that attempt to reflect these changes. Taken together these works of fiction emphasize the human cost of, and connection to the war. Although not completely devoid of politics, these works push political issues to the margins in order to explore the experiences of the average Irish citizen during the war. By shifting the focus away from politics, these works address both the ideas of remembering the war and forgetting the politically charged rhetoric that serves to perpetuate divisions in Irish society. In this way the literature of this period differs from that of 1970s, where politics functioned as an important literary trope. Authors like as Jennifer Johnston used the literature medium and the trope of the Great War in Ireland to demonstrate similarities between that period and contemporary Ireland, while more recent fiction tends to examine the First World War as an historical phenomenon in Ireland and how an international conflict affected domestic issues from the highest level all the way down to the single family unit.⁶² As a result, Irish fiction writers endeavored to make the Irish experience in the First World War palatable to everyone.

One of the most popular and well-received works of fiction on the subject came from Sebastian Barry under the title *A Long Long Way*. The novel tells the story of Willie Dunne, the son of the Chief Superintendent of the Dublin Metropolitan Police, who enlists in the British Army at the outbreak of the First World War. Private Dunne labors

⁶² See, for example, J. G. Farrell, *Troubles* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1970) and Jennifer Johnston, *How Many Miles to Babylon?* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1974), discussed in Chapter 5.

at the Front with his Irish comrades during the early part of the war. While home on furlough in 1916, he is caught in the middle of what turned out to be the Easter Rising. As a soldier fresh from the Front, Willie failed to understand the reasons for the unrest in Dublin, initially. Once he returned to the continent and began to think more about the situation back home Dunne started to sympathize with the Republican cause. Willie wrote as much to his father, a unionist, who became upset with his son. On Dunne's next furlough the reception he received from his father was very cold and distant, unlike his previous visit. By the time Willie's father took it upon himself to look past the politics of the day and into the humanity of Willie's thoughts his son died at the front.⁶³

Barry told journalist Kevin Myers that the genesis of the book came at the suggestion of his editor who, in 2002, pointed out that almost nothing had been written on the Irish and the Great War since *How Many Miles To Babylon?* (with the notable exception of McGuinness' play). The book won critical acclaim throughout Ireland and was short-listed for several awards and received €10,000 as winner of the Kerry Group Irish Fiction Award at the Listowel Writers' Week in June 2006.⁶⁴ As he learned more about the Irish experience in the war, in his own writing Barry "wanted to cause in a private individual's heart a moment of thankfulness to those men." Myers points out that the value of fiction is the ability to juxtapose events for emphasis. For instance, Dunne is in Dublin for the Rising and yet, a few days later, he is back on the Continent in the midst of a gas attack. Although no real Irish regiments shared that particular series of events,

⁶³ Sebastian Barry, *A Long Long Way* (New York: Viking, 2005).

⁶⁴ *Irish Times*, 1 June 2006.

the choice to do so in fiction reinforces the idea that while one man's heroes were suffering for their cause in Ireland another man's heroes were doing the same on the continent, and that the human response from the losses incurred in either scenario was similar.⁶⁵ Furthermore, Willie's father wrote him a letter of apology explaining how he had lost perspective in the midst of the current political unrest, and that he was proud of his son's soldiering in the war. The fact that Willie was killed just before receiving the letter provides a metaphor of the lost opportunity so many Irish people experienced in recognizing the sacrifices their loved ones made in the Great War.

Green Poppies is another work of fiction that makes significant use of the First World War to tell its story. The title alone suggests the goal of reconciling the differences between Catholic, republican Ireland, and the First World War. Patricia Hickey's story revolves around Helena, an elderly Irish woman whose niece, Rebecca, prompts her to examine her youth. Helena came from a mixed Irish family, with a Protestant mother and Catholic father who was also in the British army and was killed during the First World War. Rebecca brings Helena a box of her mother's old papers as she searches for the identity of "M", whom Rebecca believes to be her real grandfather. As Helena attempts to decipher the identity of "M" through her mother's papers and her own memory, she paints a complex picture of Irish society during the First World War.

What sets Hickey's work apart from others is that it explicitly examines the experience of women and children during the war, and how they coped with the changes in Irish society and with a loved one at the front. Through flashbacks Hickey addresses issues like running a single-parent home, coping with wartime rationing, and dealing with

⁶⁵ *Irish Times*, 9 April 2005.

the absence of a family member. In addition, she explores the way that the war affected the women in Helena's family through the course of the twentieth century. Her niece, Rebecca, in believing that Helena's father was not her biological grandfather denies her true family history. Rebecca, therefore, functions as a metaphor for the thousands of Irish people who had relatives who fought in the Great War, but failed to recognize the importance of their sacrifice. The myth the story attempts to disprove is that having a relative who fought in the Great War negatively impacts one's sense of Irishness. However, when Helena discovers that the mysterious "M" is not a person at all, but the drug morphine, Rebecca is forced to accept her past and reconcile it with her life in contemporary Ireland. Hickey's story celebrates the resurrection of the memory of the Great War in Ireland while at the same time critiques Irish apathy toward that memory for most of the twentieth century.⁶⁶

One more notable contribution to Great War literature in Ireland is *The Canal Bridge* by Tom Phelan. The story revolves around three main characters, the siblings Con and Kittie Hatchel and Con's best friend Matthias Wrenn. Con and Matthias volunteer for the British Army during the First World War and spend their tours of duty together as stretcher-bearers in the front lines. Of the two, Matthias survived the war. Con, on the other hand, reached his tipping point while at the front and ended up confronting Field Marshal Haig for which he received a death sentence. Upon returning to Ireland, Matthias remains disconnected and distraught for a long period. He eventually marries Kittie Hatchel once he has recovered. However, local republicans put Matthias in their crosshairs when he refuses to join their cause. In an unfortunate turn of events, a

⁶⁶ Patrica Hickey, *Green Poppies* (Belfast: The Blackstaff Press, 2004).

republican mob attacks Matthias at his home and kills him, leaving behind Kittie to mourn the loss of both her brother and her husband.

Phelan's story tracks the lives of the Hatchel siblings and Wrenn from childhood to Kittie's golden years. The one constant through all their life changes is the canal that runs through town. As children, they made up a sing-song about the canal with the refrain "come to my side," a phrase that acts as a recurring metaphor throughout the story. The trope of making choices and their consequences is evident in a number of events. Con and Matthias' decision to join the British army, Con's decision to confront his superior officers, Matthias' decision to save Con from the firing squad, and Matthias' decision not to give in to republican intimidation at home all dramatically changed the course of the story. This metaphor also functions on a broader level, suggesting that choosing sides is not limited to the characters in the book or the time period in which they lived, but that contemporary Ireland continues to take sides regarding its historic involvement in the Great War.⁶⁷

Academic History

In addition to novelists, professional historians increasingly turned their attention to the subject of Ireland and the First World War. As the number of scholarly journal articles and book chapters increased in the closing decades of the twentieth century a significant hole remained in the production of monographs. Most of the books published on the subject continued to come from the pens of amateur historians and journalists,

⁶⁷ Tom Phelan, *The Canal Bridge* (Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 2005).

such as Myles Dungan, and Philip Orr.⁶⁸ Many of these works also fell into the category of traditional military history, discussing specific regiments or battalions with the main goal of recounting battlefield experience and discussions of troop movements. While this sort of research is important in its own right, it does little in the way of placing the Irish experience in a broader context, or analyzing and interpreting the Irish experience in the war at home and abroad. Keith Jeffery's *Ireland and the Great War*, published in 2000, based on a series of lectures at Cambridge took strides toward filling that gap. And recent works from scholars such as Senia Paseta, Ben Novick, Nuala Johnston, Catherine Switzer, Fergus D'Arcy, and the 2008 collection edited by John Horne have begun to parse and scrutinize the Irish war experience in a more rigorous fashion.⁶⁹ Unsurprisingly, the increased output of professional historians on the subject of the Great War in Ireland has generated more public dialogue and inspired additional research from a new generation of post-graduate students in Ireland and abroad. Although the current state of Ireland's Great War historiography still lags behind many of the other participant nations, like Britain, France, and Germany, great strides have been made

⁶⁸ See, for example, Myles Dungan, *Irish Voices from the Great War* (Dublin, Ireland: Irish Academic Press, 1995); idem., *They Shall Grow Not Old: Irish Soldiers and the Great War* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1997); Philip Orr, *Field of Bones: An Irish Division at Gallipoli* (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2006); idem., *The Road to the Somme: Men of the Ulster Division Tell Their Story*, 2nd ed. (Belfast, Northern Ireland: Blackstaff Press, 2008).

⁶⁹ Adrian Gregory and Senia Pašeta, eds., *Ireland and the Great War: A War to Unite Us All?* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002); Ben Novick, *Conceiving Revolution: Irish Nationalist Propaganda during the First World War* (Dublin, Ireland and Portland, OR: Four Courts Press, 2001); Nuala Johnson, *Ireland, the Great War and the Geography of Remembrance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Catherine Switzer, *Unionists and Great War Commemoration in the North of Ireland 1914-1918* (Dublin and Portland, OR: Irish Academic Press, 2007); Fergus A. D'Arcy, *Remembering the War Dead: British Commonwealth and International War Graves in Ireland Since 1914* (Dublin: Stationery Office, 2007); John Horne, ed., *Our War: Ireland and the Great War* (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2008).

toward rectifying that situation since the mid-1980s. As Irish historians, in general, move beyond rote debates about Ireland's political history other much-neglected subjects are finally beginning to get their due and to flourish. For the First World War, which has remained dormant in many areas of the island for decades, this is a necessary and welcome change.



Enniskillen proved to be a watershed moment in the history of the memory of the Great War in Ireland. Not only did it bring greater awareness to Remembrance Day and Ireland's involvement in the First World War, but also the bombing occurred at a time when Irish citizens had grown weary of the on-going Troubles. In the south the booming Celtic Tiger economy immersed the Irish into an international community and the First World War stood as an example of Ireland paying their collective dues to Europe, and therefore justifying their newfound success in the European Union. Increased attention to the memory of the Great War also positioned it as a useful component of the northern peace process, providing common ground for nationalists and loyalists alike. The gap between the official and vernacular memory of the war decreased in the period since 1987, especially in the south where the government took an active role in restoring the Islandbridge memorial, funding a new war memorial in Belgium, advocating for the pardon of executed Irish soldiers, and participating in domestic commemorative activities. Progress was incremental and slow, and encountered opposition at times, but as Ireland pushes forward into the twenty-first century, the memory of the Great War serves

to remind the Irish, north and south, of their historical successes and failures, as well as to blaze a new, inclusive concept of Irish identity.

CONCLUSION

Wherever the battle was fiercest there was the Irish soldier to be found. Irishmen stood in the gap at Mons; Irishmen shattered the power of Turkey in Gallipoli and Palestine; Irishmen were foremost in the blood-drenched steeps of the Somme, and Irishmen of the North and South stood side by side victorious on the ridge of Messines. Turn where you will, read what history you choose, no one can say that in the day of battle Irishmen did less than their duty.

– Major Bryan Cooper, TD, at the Remembrance Day ceremony at Killester (1922).¹

If the entire world were truly a stage, then the drama unfolding during the First World War in Ireland starred not a person, but an idea—nationalism. What began as a crisis of political aspirations between Home Rulers and Unionists in 1914, fragmented and morphed by 1918 into a scenario that pitted Unionists against nationalist Republicans. By then the Home Rulers were obsolete and in political terms were on the outside looking in. Meanwhile, on the continent, the war that was supposed to be “over by Christmas” dragged on for four years and turned into one of the greatest traumas of European history. The Irish men who served in the war and demobilized in Ireland found that since they had left their native shores the ground shifted underneath the Home Rule movement, leaving nationalist Republicans as the new Irish ascendancy. Those who went off to war as heroes and defenders of small nations, by no fault of their own, were cast to the wayside of Irish history.

¹ *Freeman's Journal*, 12 November 1922.

The memory of the First World War in Ireland is the story of competing concepts of national identity. During the inter-war period at least two distinct constructs of Irish identity emerge in the south. Despite the fluidity inherent in all identities, certain characteristics and tenets underpinned both forms throughout most of the period. The strongest was the Republican Irish national identity, which emphasized Irish independence, Irish language and culture, and recognized the Easter Rising as the military struggle that formed the basis of an independent Ireland. By the middle of the twentieth century, this concept of Irish national identity dominated Irish society. Northern Ireland's unionist identity was, in many ways, an inversion of the republican Irish identity. Unionists desired to remain part of Great Britain and separate from the Republican South. For them the blood sacrifice of Ulstermen during the Great War sealed their bond with Great Britain, and was a talisman of their unique brand of Irish identity.

Apathy and inaction from Irish officials, notably in the south, toward Irish ex-servicemen was not able to deter the development of an Irish national identity that embraced Ireland's role in the Great War and was rooted in vernacular culture. This alternative concept of Irish identity differed markedly from the republican version by recognizing an array of political affiliations, most notably the vestiges of the Irish Parliamentary Party, accepting Ireland's historic relationship with Britain, and acknowledging Ireland's participation and sacrifice in the First World War. During the inter-war period, this minority alternative Irish national identity contested the legitimacy of the majority Republican national identity because it undermined several of that identity's main tenets. However, as the century progressed, the Republican identity became dominant and

entrenched. The World War I veterans, while a sizeable and vocal group, in the end lacked both the numbers and the clarity of purpose to sustain an alternative vision of the nation.

No one can deny the fact that what emerged as the dominant strand of Irish national identity in the twentieth century followed nationalist and republican lines. In the era of nations and nationalism this comes as little surprise because the government in power needed to justify its existence. In the case of Ireland, the past relationship with Great Britain marked the point of departure against which many of the Irish framed their national identity. Yet, no matter how much Fianna Fáil, de Valera, or any other Irish politician or nationalist tried to tamp down Ireland's role in the Great War they were unable to erase the memory of the war completely from the collective Irish consciousness. A large population of ex-servicemen and a wide variety of social and cultural veteran institutions remained visible and questioned what it meant to be Irish. This alternative Irish identity experienced high points and low points throughout the twentieth century, but the culture of commemoration that developed around the memory of the First World War functioned as a very real and, at times, very legitimate sense of Irishness throughout the century.

The alternative Irish national identity posed a significant challenge to republicans because most of the support for it was not political, but rather existed in Irish society and culture, making it harder to regulate. The present study focused on the cultural components of this identity to show how, exactly, it came to challenge the mainstream notion of Irishness.

Every November, very public displays of support for Ireland's Great War veterans and war dead took the form of Remembrance Day ceremonies and the Poppy Appeal. These examples of collective solidarity brought together large numbers of people across the island to commemorate and make sense of the tragedy and trauma of the First World War, an event that republicans denied had any connection with the achievement of independence. The sheer number of people involved with these events demonstrated the broad range of Irish political and nationalist thinking. At the same time, the fact that similar ceremonies took place in Northern Ireland reiterated the connection between the two regions, a sentiment that also ran counter to republican nationalism. Furthermore, the existence and size of coordinated opposition to these events, such as that by the Anti-Imperialist League, showed that Remembrance Day was not something that could be ignored with the hope that interest in it would fade over time. Instead, opponents needed to take a firm stand in denouncing these public exhibitions in order to beat back the challenge to mainstream Irish national identity. Although oppositional efforts failed to erase completely the First World War from Ireland's historical record, they were able to check widespread awareness and acknowledgement of Ireland's role in the war for the better part of the twentieth century.

Memorials dedicated to Ireland's Great War dead posed many of the same problems for Irish republicans. In addition, memorials showed that Irish citizens freely donated money to commemorate their war dead, and the memorials erected on the continent illustrated a greater recognition of Ireland's role in the international community at a time when the Free State government was concerned with consolidating power and

developing Ireland's domestic infrastructure. Furthermore, war memorials, both public and private, served as sites of memory where people came together to commemorate their dead. The nature and location of many memorials prohibited the government from banning these commemorative exercises, and, instead, forced them to come up with alternative methods of regulating Great War commemoration.

Irish popular culture proved an even harder arena to control, and the memory of the Great War flourished through a wide variety of organizations and media. Battlefield pilgrimages, folk music, British Legion activities such as dances and fairs, and the array of old comrade's associations provided a glimpse into the dynamic of an entire sub-community in Ireland that revolved around the memory of the Great War. Taken as a whole, the memory of the war in Irish popular culture gave life to a large minority in Ireland and further entrenched the sentiment of comradeship and solidarity among ex-servicemen. Therefore, the memory of the war and the brand of Irish identity associated with it possessed structure, which made it a serious challenge to Irish republican versions of the national identity.

The sustained problems of housing and unemployment constituted another area that generated solidarity and comradeship among ex-servicemen and in many ways helped to polarize the ex-service community against the ruling regime. Although the Irish Sailors and Soldiers Land Trust was specifically created for the purpose of giving back to those who served in the war, inconsistent implementation of housing schemes and issues over rents doomed the project in the Free State. At the same time, agitation aimed at correcting the situation fortified the ex-service community. In the North, the housing

schemes did not experience the same opposition from tenants in terms of rents, but the number of homes constructed in the north remained a point of contention for many years. Unemployment proved a universal concern in both the north and the south. Taken together, these issues illustrated the general neglect of ex-servicemen in Ireland. In the Free State, statements given to the Committee on the Claims of British Ex-Servicemen outlined almost a decade of neglect on the part of both British and Irish governments. Here, the challenge to the status quo moved beyond the realm of Irish society and culture and into official government channels.

The interwar period constituted the apotheosis of the alternative Irish national identity espoused by the ex-service community. Over time, its challenge to the hegemonic republican nationalist Irish identity waned. The memory of the war, however, underwent a number of changes, which resulted, in large part, from the re-assessment and re-appropriation of the memory of the Great War in the decades following the Second World War. Those within the ex-service community, dwindling in size with the passage of time, continued to engage in the tried and true forms of commemoration developed during the interwar period. The outbreak of The Troubles in the late 1960s, however, inspired a cadre of Irish artists and writers to re-examine the First World War and how it related to contemporary Irish affairs. Therefore, while the traditional challenge to republican hegemony faded into the background, a new school of cultural contributors used the memory of the First World War as a means to criticize and comment upon the status quo in Ireland.

By the time of the Enniskillen bombing in November of 1987, the foundation laid

by cultural contributors in the 1970s and early 1980s began to gain greater support.

Worn out by years of conflict and death, the Enniskillen bombing was a culminating moment in the history of the memory of the Great War by transforming it from a divisive concept to one that encouraged unity. A flourish of projects aimed at commemorating the war and serving as sites of memory and reconciliation appeared in Ireland and on the continent. Ireland's booming economy, beginning in the 1990s, and increased involvement in European and transatlantic affairs accelerated this process. By the opening decade of the twenty-first century, the war that the Irish establishment wanted nothing to do with recognized it as an event that transcended Irish political and sectarian differences. Slowly, Ireland's role in the First World War became part of the official government understanding of Irish nationalism.

Of course, despite all of the progress made since the late 1980s, the First World War continued to have its critics. One of the major roadblocks to total acceptance appeared to be a failure to understand the role of the First World War in Irish history as it became re-assimilated. Republican national identity prevented some critics from accepting a pluralistic Irish past. Some critics feared that all the attention given to the First World War since Enniskillen was an attempt to subordinate the Easter Rising to the Great War as the principle sacrifice for Irish independence.² Clearly, this was not the case and not only demonstrated a complete misunderstanding of the subject, but also illustrated just how entrenched Irish republicanism was against the memory of the First

² Radio Free Eireann, 27 March 2010.

Radio Free Eireann is a dissident Republican radio program based in the United States. The 27 March 2010 broadcast included a discussion with Sean Whelan of Ireland's National Graves Association about Irish president Mary McAleese's recent trip to Turkey to commemorate the Irish at Gallipoli and the state of the memory of the Great War in Ireland.

World War. In fact, what advocates of the Great War sought was acknowledgement from official channels of Ireland's participation and sacrifices in the war. The goal was never to supplant past events in Irish history, but to expose a wider range of historical events that created a more complete, albeit complex, Irish past. Although it took the better part of a century, by the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century more and more Irish people began to understand and accept the words of Major Bryan Cooper that no one could say the Irish in the First World War did less than their duty.

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